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THE REVOLT OF THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "THE REVOLT OF THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN" submitted by CAROL M. TOVEE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts.

ABSTRACT

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a series of chaotic and spontaneous events which, while not sufficient to bring down the autocracy, forced the promise of a parliamentary system of government from Nicholas II. The discontent and unrest of that year affected all segments of the Russian population: worker, peasant, student, intellectual revolutionary and even the armed forces.

On June 14, 1905, the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii mutinied and for eleven days was at large in the Black Sea. This incident has subsequently been eulogized by Soviet historians as one of the most significant events of the revolution; the conscious defection of the military to the side of the people.

While the mutiny was a spontaneous reaction to spoiled meat aboard the Potemkin, the atmosphere which made the mutiny possible had been prepared by conditions in the navy and in the country generally. Agitation by the revolutionary parties, particularly the Social Democrats, was a contributing cause, but the claim that the revolutionaries planned the mutiny would seem to be unjustified.

From a mutiny the sailors sought to construct a revolution. They sailed to Odessa which was in the throes of a general strike, but spurned advice to land in force. Contrary to their expectations,



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only one other ship of the Black Sea Fleet joined the Potemkin, but the Georgii's crew soon had a change of heart and surrendered to the authorities. Unwilling to participate in revolutionary events ashore and unable to obtain allies at sea, the poorly led and poorly supplied sailors of the Potemkin capitulated to the Romanians.

This thesis is a description of these events and more particularly the reasons for their occurrence and the causes of the mutiny's failure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF MAPS AND DIAGRAMS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
I. SEVASTOPOL ON THE EVE OF THE MUTINY..	12
II. DRAMA AT TENDROVSKII BAY	27
III. EVENTS IN ODESSA	43
IV. IN THE ODESSA ROADS	60
V. "TO ROMANIA!"	85
VI. AFTERMATH	109
VII. CONCLUSION	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY	124
APPENDIX: Declarations of the <u>Potemkin</u>	138

LIST OF MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

Figure		Page
1.	Diagram of the main deck of the <u>Potemkin</u>	35
2.	Map of Odessa	46
3.	Map of the Black Sea	93

INTRODUCTION

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a series of chaotic and spontaneous disturbances which shook the Tsarist regime to its foundations. The Revolution is usually dated from Bloody Sunday, January 9, 1905,¹ but its roots go deep into Russia's past. Western scholars view the Revolution as complete with the issuance of the October Manifesto, which promised a parliamentary system of government; Soviet scholars are concerned with the Revolution of 1905-1907. In this way they include the peasant disturbances of 1906 and the counter-revolution which climaxed in the oppressive laws of June, 1907. With restriction of the suffrage in 1907, the Russian parliament, or Duma, lost all claim to be a representative body. This is a better characterization of events as it points up a fundamental fact; the Revolution of 1905 was not a success, the autocracy survived with its powers relatively unimpaired. It made concessions when compelled and regrouped its forces as soon as it was able.

The events of 1905 were unco-ordinated, the results of a popular upheaval in which the groups involved generally

¹ All dates are given according to the Julian calendar (old style) which is thirteen days behind the Gregorian (new style) in the twentieth century.

pursued disparate courses, and failed to apply sufficient pressure at any one point long enough to force a major change. Support for the autocracy had not been undermined to the extent that it was impossible to shore up the regime.

Almost all segments of Russian society had grievances against the autocracy. But one of the weaknesses of the insurgent forces was that often their grievances and objectives were different. This was particularly true of the divergence of aims of the educated liberal minority and those of the peasants and the urban masses. The liberals sought political reform either in the guise of Imperial decrees or, preferably, from a constituent assembly. The masses were concerned with more immediate and pressing needs: land, wages, taxes and prices. After Bloody Sunday, the people began to take events into their own hands and moved further away from the liberals who were coming to fear the violence the revolution had wrought. The disparity of aims is further shown by the liberals' acceptance of the October Manifesto which was followed by the Moscow workers' uprising and the peasant unrest of 1906.

The provincial zemstvos and municipal dumas were main strongholds of liberal opinion. As elective bodies they were alien to the autocratic and bureaucratic system. The bureaucracy

was the instrument of the will of the Tsar, rigidly hierarchical, vast, cumbersome, venal and almost totally unresponsive to outside pressure. Thus the liberal forces were isolated, unable to gain the support of the masses, and equally unable to influence the government.

The "peasant question" was one which had long plagued government and society. Growing peasant distress was apparent to all, and the need for a remedy obvious. It was a lack of policy rather than a lack of willingness that defeated solution to a problem which added to revolutionary unrest.

The peasants were becoming steadily, desperately, more impoverished. The causes of their growing poverty were apparent enough, even if an acceptable solution was not. The crux of the problem was the peasant commune which was considered by the regime to be the foundation of the rural administrative system. This is why no solution to the peasant question had been found by 1905, but the problem was strangling the largest mass of people in the country. The commune was collectively responsible for taxes, redemption payments, redistribution of land, and providing military conscripts. This collective principle determined the character of the Russian countryside. Since the commune was responsible for all money

payments to the state, it could not afford to let members leave the commune even though the government had relaxed the laws restricting internal migration. This led to drastic rural overpopulation and to a subsequent diminution of peasant allotments. Poor agricultural techniques, coupled with a disinclination to improve land which would subsequently pass out of the peasants' hands, further diminished the yield. S. G. Witte's industrialization program, which combined high tariffs with low internal grain prices, was further to the detriment of the peasants who could not pay the high prices for manufactured goods while receiving poor prices for their grain. And all this while they were being forced to pay redemption dues and heavy indirect taxes. No wonder the peasants' payments were in arrears. No wonder there were famines in 1897, 1898 and 1901, as well as agrarian disturbances in 1902 in Kharkov and Poltava provinces, and more general, wide-spread, and terrifying disturbances in 1905-1906.

Industrialization brought to Russia a growing proletariat and increasing worker unrest. Protective laws, while prohibiting trade unions and outlawing strikes, did very little to "protect" the workers from the evils of long working hours, poverty wages, poor working conditions, miserable

housing, or the abuses of their employers. The Russian proletariat was ripe for the radical agitator who took advantage of this discontent to rouse the workers to action. Illegal strikes had become such a problem by 1900 that the government adopted the curious "police socialism" of S. V. Zubatov by which it tried to divert the workers from illegal demands to mutual self-help organizations. Zubatovism coincided with the industrial recession of 1900-1903, and in their plight the workers were not content with the innocuous aspect of the organizations, but utilized them for making economic demands enforced by strikes. The Zubatov unions were disbanded in 1903, but almost immediately reorganized as the Assembly of St. Petersburg Factory Workers under the priest Father Gapon, soon to figure prominently in Bloody Sunday.

The Russo-Japanese war crystallized the discontent felt by the disparate elements of Russian society. When the war began in 1904, there had been a brief patriotic lull as all of Russia seemed to back the war effort, but Russia's defeat at the hands of a hitherto unimportant Asiatic power exposed the impotence of the autocracy. The liberals became more vociferous in their demands, while the worker and peasant discontent increased as the war increased

their hardships. It was difficult to be patriotic about a disastrous war fought over a distant territory of no significance to the average Russian.

The contribution of the revolutionary parties to the unrest of 1905 is difficult to assess. Both the Social Democratic and the Socialist Revolutionary parties were in their infancy, however, they made every attempt to incite workers and peasants to action. Perhaps more important, they spurred the liberals to adopt increasingly radical demands. As the Revolution of 1905 was largely spontaneous, no party can be credited with much influence over either its inception or its course.

The Revolution began in St. Petersburg with Bloody Sunday, when the authorities fired on a peaceful demonstration of workers. This event had a powerful effect on the psychology of the Russian population. It destroyed the last vestiges of faith in the good intentions of the autocracy and unleashed social violence which was to spread across Russia and catch up all segments of the population: worker and peasant, national minority and soldier, student and revolutionary.

One of the peripheral consequences of the revolution was the mutiny of the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii in June of 1905. A spontaneous outbreak of violence in which

a number of ship's officers were killed, this incident took on political significance once the Potemkin became involved in revolutionary events in Odessa and disrupted the Black Sea Fleet.

This single incident of the Revolution of 1905 has been eulogized by the Soviets as one of the most important ~~single~~ events of 1905; the conscious defection of military force to the side of the people. The major anniversaries of the 1905 Revolution, the twentieth and the fiftieth, have called forth a spate of memoirs, documents and literature from Soviet historians. Of this material, much has been devoted to the Potemkin. Naturally, distortions in the facts and in the intentions of the mutineers have appeared. In the course of time the mutiny has gained much in revolutionary glamor, and lost much in reality.

The Potemkin mutiny is known outside of Russia chiefly through Sergei Eisenstein's film "The Battleship Potemkin," a romanticized version of the incident, which was made to serve a propaganda purpose by showing the common people that they were the revolution. The film portrays the mutiny as one of the first mighty upsurges of the Russian people against the autocracy, with the mutineers and the citizens of Odessa uniting to strike a blow for freedom.

In English, there are two readily accessible accounts of the mutiny. Captain Geoffrey Bennett of the Royal Navy begins his article "The Potemkin Mutiny"² by mentioning the "political considerations" embodied in Eisenstein's film, however his version closely follows that of Eisenstein and is equally inaccurate. Bennett's sources were limited to accounts of the mutiny in the Russian press and in British consular reports. He betrayed his approach when he wrote that he regretted not being able to consult the "only presumably accurate records," the official naval reports.³

In 1960, Richard Hough, an author with a personal interest in naval history, published a book titled The Potemkin Mutiny.⁴ Although he acknowledges Captain Bennett's article as "admirable," his own work is a considerable improvement on it. Unfortunately, in this popular history, Hough does not cite his sources, while his acknowledgements give cause to suspect that he does not read Russian. All his references are to works which can be obtained in English,

² Captain Geoffery Bennett, R.N. (Ret.), "The Potemkin Mutiny," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, Vol. LXXXV, No. 9, 1959, pp. 58-66.

³ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴ Richard Hough, The Potemkin Mutiny (London, 1960).

while there could hardly be any other reason for translating the Potemkin's subsequent name Sviatii Panteleimon (Saint Pantelemion) as the Low Peasant. This inability to read Russian would seriously limit the number of sources at his disposal. Hough also accepts as historical fact such apocryphal episodes as the massacre on the Richelieu Steps, perhaps in the interests of sprightly writing. Furthermore, "Mr. Hough lacks the equipment of the professional historian, and reveals no great knowledge of, or even interest in, the historical background."⁵ Considering the shortcomings of both the Soviet and the Western treatments, as well as the inherent drama of the mutiny, it is surprising that a more serious and complete account of the Potemkin has not appeared.

The events of the Potemkin mutiny are best told in chronological order, but they must also be placed in historical perspective. For instance, while it is true that the mutiny began as a demonstration over spoiled meat, bad food was not sufficient cause for the murder of seven of the ship's officers. Moreover, at a different time in history it is unlikely that the Potemkin would have considered

⁵ Times Literary Supplement, December 23, 1960, p. 823.

itself a "people's republic" with a mission to fight for the freedom of the Russian people. Attention must be paid to conditions in Sevastopol -- the base of the Black Sea Fleet and the point from which revolutionary agitation and organization reached the sailors -- as well as to events in Odessa and their interdependence with events aboard the Potemkin.

The main sources for a study of the Potemkin mutiny are the contemporary newspaper accounts and the memoirs of the chief participants: K. Feldman, Kirill [A.P. Berezovskii], A. Matiushenko, and A. Kovalenko, all written within a few years of the event. On the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution of 1905, a number of Soviet journals published additional memoir material, largely on the Sevastopol and Odessa party organizations. The most valuable contributions were in Proletarskaia revoliutsiia (Proletarian Revolution), while less important ones appeared in Katorga i ssylka (Penal Servitude and Exile) and Letopis revoliutsii (Chronicle of the Revolution). The best general account, which also includes interesting official naval reports, is A.P. Platonov's Vosstanie v chernomorskom flote v 1905 godu (Mutiny in the Black Sea Fleet in 1905) published in Leningrad in 1925. Official reports of events in Odessa were published in 1935,

in Krasnyi arkhiv (Red Archive) under the title "Bronenosets Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii v Odesse" (The Battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii in Odessa). This combination of materials makes it possible to reconstruct, with a fair degree of certainty, the events aboard the Potemkin, in Odessa, in the Black Sea Fleet, and the official reaction to them.

CHAPTER I

SEVASTOPOL ON THE EVE OF THE MUTINY

The Potemkin mutiny was not an isolated incident. The great naval base of Sevastopol had been troubled by unrest for some time. It was mainly here that revolutionary agitation and organization affected the sailors, while conditions in the navy itself did much to create dissatisfaction.

Even before 1905, there was evidence of unrest in the Black Sea Fleet. There had been a number of major disorders. In July 1903, on board the cruiser Berezan, a demonstration over spoiled meat ended peaceably only when the crew was given fresh supplies.¹ Bad food also caused disorders involving upwards to 2,000 men at the Lazarevskii naval barracks.² But it was the November 3, 1904, incident which added a new and threatening note.³ On the order of the Commander-in-Chief, the men had not been allowed out of their quarters in the evening of November 3, on the pretence that the red leave tickets which were to replace the usual white ones had not arrived. The true reason emerged when the frantic wives of the

¹ A. P. Platonov, Vosstanie v chernomorskom flote v 1905 godu (Leningrad, 1925), p. 14.

² Ibid., p. 17.

³ Petition of Vice Admiral Kriger to Tsar Nicholas II, quoted in Platonov, p. 158.

sailors collected outside the barracks with the news that their homes were being torn down by the civil authorities. These houses were actually huts which had been put up by the sailors on municipal land in the Korabel'naia Slobodka (Ship's Settlement) on the outskirts of Sevastopol.⁴ When it was obvious that this was the reason the sailors were being denied leave, a riot broke out. Furniture was destroyed, windows were broken, and shots fired. But since the sailors were unable to get out of the barracks square,⁵ the disturbance was easily quelled by loyal troops of the Brestskii regiment.

What made this incident especially disquieting was not that force was required to end it, but that political agitation was coupled with it. There was no indication of organization in the riot,⁶ but the next day a Social Democratic proclamation appeared calling for an armed uprising. Vice Admiral Kriger wrote that the command's fear of an open revolt dated from November 3, 1904.⁷

Among the causes contributing to this continuing unrest were the conditions existing in the Russian Imperial Navy. About this time several letters from sailors were published in émigré newspapers.

⁴ N. Novikov, "1905 god i flot, " Morskii sbornik, No. 1, 1926, p. 113.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ A. Drezen, Armia i flot v revoliutsii 1905 g. (Moscow, 1935), p. 31.

⁷ Petition of Vice Admiral Kriger to the Tsar, quoted in Platonov, p. 158.

They portray barracks life in very dark colors, but if the understandable overemphasis is taken into account, they present an interesting composite picture of naval life on the eve of the Potemkin mutiny.⁸

The sailors day began at 5:00 A.M., breakfast -- consisting of kasha made from grain, salt, and water (and sometimes a helping of sand) -- was served before the men reported for duty at 6:00 A.M. The sailors worked until 11:00 A.M. and again from 12:30 until 5:00 P.M. Dinner was always borshch which was supposed to include a half a pound of meat per man although it seldom did. One correspondent complained that the "meat" consisted only of bones, sinews, lungs, and liver.⁹ Supper was kasha again. Bread was baked once a week, and thus was generally stale if not moldy by the time it was eaten (another correspondent was unable to identify mold, but did object to the "pale blue stripes" on the bottom of the loaves).¹⁰ Tea and sugar were bought by the sailors with their own money.

The sailors rarely had a bath, indeed there were only eight places for one thousand men to wash. A further complication was an insufficiency of water; there was frequently not enough for drinking, let alone for washing. The quarters were equally depressing. There

⁸ Proletarii, No. 2, May 21, 1905, and Iskra, No. 98, April 23, 1905, quoted in Sevastopol'skoe vooruzhennoe vosstanie v noiabre 1905 godu. (Moscow, 1957), pp. 73-81.

⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

was not enough light to read by and no place to write. The men complained that the barracks, which were described as cramped, dark, and poorly ventilated, were like a prison. Work finished at 5:00 P.M., final roll call was at 8:00 P.M. During the interval the sailors could leave the barracks, but only with a pass, and on explaining where they were going. Once a month, the sailors were entitled to a leave until midnight.

Unpleasant as these conditions admittedly were, it is unlikely that they were the ultimate cause of the unrest amongst the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet. Lieutenant Aleksandr Kovalenko, a junior engineer mechanic aboard the *Potemkin*, in an effort to explain the causes of the mutiny wrote:

In almost two years of service, I have seen enough of the conditions of this life, to be convinced that by themselves they are by no means sufficient to give rise to such dissatisfaction as to result in anything similar to the events of June 14, 1905.¹¹

In his opinion the sailors were not overworked, in fact the actual working day seldom exceeded eight hours.¹² Furthermore, Kovalenko

¹¹ A.M. Kovalenko, "Odinnadtsat dnei na bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii," Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 100. The memoirs of Lieutenant Aleksandr Kovalenko are of special value as he was one of the officers who joined the mutiny. While his sympathies were with the men of the Potemkin, he was a reasonably fair and dispassionate observer.

¹² Ibid. See also V.I. Nevskii, Vosstanie na bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii (Moscow-Petrograd, 1924), p. 23.

stated that the food aboard ship was generally of good quality; he and many other officers had frequently eaten with the men with satisfaction. He agreed that incidents over the food had occurred but attributed them to chance oversights.¹³ He did admit to unsatisfactory and strained relations between officers and men which he blamed on tactlessness on the part of the officers and on the social gap between the ranks.¹⁴

Kovalenko concluded that "the sailors do not live too badly, at least in comparison to life outside the navy."¹⁵ This is a valid point, conditions being what they were in factory and countryside. Life in the navy should have presented no great change for the worse to the majority of sailors. They were fed, housed, and clothed as well as enjoying more security than the average lower class Russian. Conditions in the Russian Imperial Navy probably did not differ markedly from conditions in other European navies in the early twentieth century.

It is necessary to look beyond life in the navy into the general state of the country to understand the causes underlying the disturbances and the excitement in the Black Sea Fleet. Seized by the same needs and aspirations as the narod from which they came, the sailors could

¹³ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 101.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

not help but be affected by the unrest sweeping across Russia. Added to this was the sailors' fear that they might be used in the suppression of disturbances; a possibility exploited by agitators and expounded in proclamations: "To you is given the order to kill even if it is your father, your brother, or your best friend."¹⁶

The disastrous war with Japan, which so greatly agitated Russian society, had a more particular effect on the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet. Morale was low through frustration and inaction. At the same time there was fear among the sailors that they would be sent into battle, as were the leaders of the barracks riot of November 3, 1904, who were dispatched to Admiral Nebogatov's Baltic Fleet before its departure for the Far East.¹⁷ And to battle for what, "for blood-stained, useless Manchuria."¹⁸

These proclamations were symptomatic of still another cause of the disruption in the Black Sea Fleet: the work of the revolutionary

¹⁶ "Ko vsem patrulnym i chasovym matrosam" (To all Patrols and Sentries), leaflet of the Sevastopol Committee of the R.S.D.R.P., quoted in Sevastopol, p. 54.

¹⁷ Nevskii, p. 17. See also S. Naida, "Stranitsy iz letopisi 1905 godu," Znamia, No. 12, 1955, p. 149. Naida writes that several thousand men were sent to join Nebogatov. The Straits of the Dardanelles were closed to Russian battleships, so the Black Sea Fleet could not be sent to fight Japan.

¹⁸ "Prizyv k soldatam" (Appeal to the Soldiers), leaflet of the Sevastopol Committee of the R.S.D.R.P., quoted in Sevastopol, p. 52.

parties, especially the Social Democrats. Agitation and propaganda were partially the work of revolutionaries in Sevastopol, partially of revolutionaries in the fleet itself. The exact date when it began among the sailors is unclear. One high naval officer dated the appearance of subversive printed materials from August 1903, when "criminal proclamations" were discovered in the Sevastopol hospital.¹⁹ Among Soviet historians and memoirists there is some disagreement, with a not unexpected attempt to predate revolutionary activity. The earliest date given is 1901,²⁰ but the majority of memoirs and historical works agree that 1902 was the year in which some form of activity began in the fleet, while a few historians believe this did not begin until 1904.²¹ The 1902 date is certainly a possibility, especially for the introduction of relatively unorganized propaganda into the fleet. It is probable that this first took the form of illegal literature, especially since the Black Sea ports were a main channel for smuggling émigré publications into Russia. On training voyages to Romania, Bulgaria

¹⁹ Petition of Vice Admiral Kriger to the Tsar, Platonov, p. 158. Iu. Portnoi states that the papers of the Chief of Naval Staff contain spy reports on the propagandist activities of Dyshkov, Shchepetov, Yakhnovskii, and Grinevskii in Sevastopol in 1903. "Vosstanie na bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 6, 1904, p. 89.

²⁰ Novikov, Morskii sbornik, No. 1, 1926, p. 119.

²¹ Notably I. Krivorukov, "Krasnye dni v Chernomorskom flote," Katorga i ssylka, No. 5, 1932, p. 39.

and the Ottoman Empire, the sailors occasionally encountered political émigrés who gave them books and pamphlets to read.²²

Another way the sailors were influenced by revolutionary ideas was through contact with workers. As one historian noted, "The revolutionary movement among the sailors is inseparable from the movement among the workers."²³ Sevastopol was not an industrial city, and its proletariat numbered only about 8,000,²⁴ but these men were mainly employed in the port and fortifications and thus had close connections with the fleet.²⁵ Sailors who had casual ties with the workers occasionally received leaflets and proclamations from them.²⁶

Sometimes sailors worked in civilian occupations where some of them were influenced by "conscious" workers, and perhaps even joined the local Social Democratic party organization. One example of this was Onisifor Ivanovich Voloshin, later to figure in the Sevastopol Social Democratic sailors organization. Voloshin spent nearly two years (1901 and 1902) on assignment to the Sormovo' factories during the construction of machinery for the cruiser Ochakov, and took part

²² Sotsial-demokrat, No. 12, August 18, 1905, contains a letter from a sailor who tells of meeting an old Russian in the port of Burgas, Bulgaria, and of smuggling the books he was given back aboard his ship.

²³ Novikov, Morskii sbornik, No. 1, 1926, p. 112.

²⁴ I. Stat'i, "Vozniknovenie krymskoi organizatsii R.K.P. (bolshevik)," Revoliutsiia v Krymu, No. 2, 1923, p. 6.

²⁵ Platonov, p. 20.

²⁶ Krivorukov, Katorga i ssylka, No. 5, 1932, p. 39.

in the work of the local Social Democratic group. When he returned to the fleet in 1903, he entered the Sevastopol organization.²⁷ Similarly, while the Potemkin was being outfitted in Nikolaev, the local organization succeeded in forming connections with some of the sailors.²⁸

Still another way sailors came into contact with revolutionary doctrines was through the conscription of active party workers. For instance, M. Yakhnovskii, a member of the Kharkov Social Democratic organization, was ordered to respect his conscription in order to create a party organization in the fleet if one did not exist there already.²⁹

Attempts have been made to explain that the navy was more revolutionary than the army either because trained workers rather than peasants were drafted into it,³⁰ or because the sailors were better trained once they were there.³¹ The technical aspects of the navy required a higher level of skill than that needed to be an infantryman, but these explanations are unnecessary. It is sufficient to note that in the navy there would be a certain number of politically conscious and even politically active sailors.

²⁷ V.I. Nevskii, ed., Deiateli revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii: bio-bibliographicheskii slovar (Moscow, 1933), Vol. V, p. 959.

²⁸ K. Rozenblium, Voennye organizatsii Bol'shevikov 1905-1907 gg. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1931), p. 24.

²⁹ I. Yakhnovskii, "Iz istorii revoliutsionnoi raboty v Chernomorskom flote nakaune 1905 goda," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 11, 1930, p. 24.

³⁰ A.M. Pankratova, Pervaia russkaia revoliutsiia (Moscow, 1951), p. 105.

³¹ M. Morshanskaia, "Matros Chernomorskogo flota A.M. Petrov," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 4, 1925, p. 138.

Given the causes of unrest in the navy and the presence of revolutionary agitation, it is still necessary to establish when a formal Social Democratic organization was created to co-ordinate this unrest. During 1903, at least one propaganda circle, that of M. Yakhnovskii, was formed among the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet.³² The actual membership of this circle is uncertain. One member supposedly was A. Matiushenko, the subsequent leader of the "people's republic" Potemkin.³³ This is doubtful since it is generally acknowledged that Matiushenko belonged to no party. In 1903, the Kharkov Committee sent Yakhnovskii the password and secret address of the Crimean Union located in Simferopol, and connections were soon established between the Union and the sailors' circle.³⁴

In April 1902, the first Sevastopol organization, the Sevastopol Workers' Organization, was created by A. Shchepetev only to be destroyed by the police two months later.³⁵ Social Democratic work did not cease in the city, but was carried on at a lower level in circles conducted by

³² Yakhnovskii, Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 11, 1930, p. 25.

³³ Yakhnovskii lists Zimin, Voloshin, Petrov, Aleksandr, Matiushenko, and later Krivokon as members of this circle. Other evidence suggests that Voloshin entered directly into the Sevastopol organization on his return from Sormovo. Nevskii, ed. Deiateli, p. 959.

³⁴ Yakhnovskii, Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 11, 1930, p. 25.

³⁵ Institut istorii partii TsKKP Ukrainy, Listovki revoliutsionnykh sotsial-demokraticheskikh organizatsii Ukrainy: 1893-1904 (Kiev, 1963), p. 797.

local activists as well as by propagandists sent in from other party centers.³⁶ At the beginning of 1903 the Social Democratic circles united into the Sevastopol Committee of the R.S.D.R.P.³⁷ which, as a result of the departure of a number of active workers, formed parties with the Crimean Union. The Crimean Union restored the activities of the Sevastopol Committee, but was itself destroyed at the end of 1904.³⁸ Help was sent from Odessa, but it was not until May or June 1905, that the Union was functioning once more.³⁹

From the above information, one can conclude that sailors' groups were formed that were unconnected with each other, and which were also connected with different higher bodies. Thus, while Yakhnovskii's ties were directly with the Crimean Union, Voloshin's were originally with the Sevastopol Committee, and only after 1904, through the Sevastopol Committee to the Crimean Union. Nor is it entirely unlikely that there were other circles among the sailors. At least one historian writes of a sailors group operating under the direction of the Southern Union and the Odessa organization.⁴⁰

Sometime in 1905 the Sevastopol organization created the Tsentralka, or the Sevastopol Central Committee, to work among the

³⁶ Sevastopol, p. 4.

³⁷ Listovki: 1898-1904, p. 797.

³⁸ Sevatopol, p. 4.

³⁹ I. Genkin, Po tiur'mam i etapam (Petrograd, 1922), p. 3.

⁴⁰ Morshanskaia, Proletarskaia revoliutsia, No. 4, 1925, p. 139.

the sailors. The date of its origin and especially its functions, are of interest because of the claim made by most Soviet historians that the Tsentralka organized a mutiny of the entire Black Sea Fleet. In this way they are able to claim that the mutineers aboard the Potemkin were acting in accordance with this plan, or even destroyed the plan by their premature uprising. In order to describe the Tsentralka as the originator of the mutiny, the characteristics of a "military organization" are, perhaps deliberately, attributed to it.

A military organization, including representatives of both the navy and the land forces, and specifically formed for the purpose of "disorganizing" the military, probably did not exist until after the Potemkin mutiny. Mention of the formation of the military group is tantalizingly elusive. The source which could be considered the most authoritative, the Protocols of the First Conference of Military and Fighting Organizations (November, 1906), contains a report by the Sevastopol delegate, V.V. Alekseev, in which he stated that the Sevastopol Military Organization had been in existence about a year and a half -- or from June or July, 1905.⁴¹ It was perhaps formed even later than this. The man often cited as the founder of the Military Organization was I. V. Voronitsin.⁴² If he was the originator, the

⁴¹ Institut Marksa-Engel'sa-Lenina pri TsK VKP(b), Pervaia konferentsiia voennykh i boevykh organizatsii RSDRP: protokoly (Moscow, 1932), p. 21.

⁴² Ibid., p. 351.

organization could not have been established until after September 5, 1905, as he was in prison until then.⁴³ One author suggests that a military-naval organization was not created until November 1905.⁴⁴

The Tsentralka, as distinct from the military organization however, existed at the time of the Potemkin mutiny.⁴⁵ By one account, in April 1905 two girls, Detina and Henrietta (Olga) Meshman, were assigned by the Sevastopol committee to co-operate with Voloshin in organizing the Tsentralka.⁴⁶ Its functions have never been clarified. In the memoirs of the time there is mention of a sailor and at least one girl who conducted open air agitation meetings in the suburbs of Sevastopol.⁴⁷ It is reasonable to assume that the sailor was Voloshin and that he was assigned by the Sevastopol Committee to conduct agitation among his fellow sailors.

Thus the function of the Tsentralka was primarily to agitate the sailors, not to organize the mutiny, which would have been the job of a "military organization" had one existed at that time in the Fleet.

Despite this evidence, nearly all Soviet writers are agreed that

⁴³ Nevskii, Deiateli, p. 1021.

⁴⁴ Iu. Bocharov, Sevastopol'skoe vosstanie (Moscow, 1925), p. 7.

⁴⁵ "Revoliutsionnye dni v chernomorskom flote," Iskra, No. 105, July 15, 1905, p. 3.

⁴⁶ N. Avdeev, "Vosstanie na bronenostse Potemkin," 1905: Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizhenia v otdelnykh ocherkakh, ed. by M. N. Pokrovskii (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), p. 187.

⁴⁷ S. Denisenko, "Potemkinskoe vosstanie," Katorga i ssylka, No. 5, 1925, p. 29.

a general armed uprising of the fleet was planned by the Tsentralka; the only area of disagreement is whether the mutiny was to take place at the beginning of summer manoeuvres or at the end. The letters of A.M. Petrov, the leader of the mutiny on the training ship Prut, are the major source for this opinion. While in prison he wrote:

We prepared to begin our business [an uprising begun by either the Potemkin or the Ekaterina II]. In the forefront of the ships were the Potemkin, Prut, Ekaterina, and Gregorii In the beginning we planned for the autumn and then the thought grew stronger and stronger that very likely it was possible to begin now.⁴⁸

This far Petrov is very convincing, although it is obvious that the ships he mentioned as revolutionary were ones that anyone would pick on a guess: three of them had mutinied and the fourth, the Ekaterina II, was considered so unreliable that she was not sent to help re-capture the Potemkin after the mutiny.

However, he continues:

This plan, which I have just described, was not worked out by anybody, it worked itself out little by little, going by word of mouth.⁴⁹

This is probably the answer; instead of a plan there were rumors and agitation about the need for an armed uprising in conjunction with the army and proletariat.

⁴⁸ A.M. Petrov, "Pis'ma matrosa A.M. Petrova, "Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 12, 1925, p. 94-95.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

CHAPTER II

DRAMA AT TENDROVSKII BAY

At 1:30 P.M. on June 12, 1905, the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii steamed out of Sevastopol harbour on her way to test her guns off Tenderovskii Peninsula. She was accompanied by torpedo boat 276, and was to be joined a short while later by the remainder of the fleet for summer manoeuvres.

The newest ship in the fleet, the Potemkin had been assigned to Sevastopol only in the autumn of 1904. Begun in 1898, she was launched in 1904, and was the largest, fastest, and most modern ship in the Black Sea.¹ The Potemkin had a displacement of 12,600 tons, was 371 feet in length, 72 1/3 feet in beam, with a maximum draught of 28 feet. She mounted 4-12" guns, and 16-6" guns, as well as some of 75 millimetres. The big 12", 40 caliber guns were in balanced turrets fore and aft, and manoeuvred electrically. They were "pretty good gun[s] with a fine range."² The Potemkin's maximum speed was 18 knots. Her compliment was 731 crew and 20 officers.

¹ All specifications are from Jane's Fighting Ships (London, 1906), pp. 275-276. While the Potemkin was the newest and most modern ship in the fleet, her superiority should not be overestimated. There was one other battleship, the Tri Sviiatitelia, whose specifications closely approached those of the Potemkin.

² Ibid., p. 275.

The Potemkin and the 267 arrived off Tendrovskii Peninsula early on the morning of June 13. Firing, however, was not scheduled to begin until June 14, so the crew was kept occupied for the remainder of the day doing routine tasks.³ In the afternoon the 267 was sent to Odessa for supplies as the vessels had taken on provisions for only two days on leaving Sevastopol. The torpedo boat returned sometime after dark and the supplies were stored in their usual places: the bread was put in the gallery, the vegetables were given to the night watch to be prepared for the next day, and the meat was hung in a cool, high place on the upper deck.⁴ The returning sailors brought news of a growing strike in Odessa.⁵ This was to have as great a significance as the meat in the following events.

The next day, June 14, began as usual. The crew was up at 5:00 A.M., "washed, attended morning prayers, breakfasted, and began to swab the decks."⁶ Then a sailor noticed worms in the hanging meat and a rumor that the meat was rotten quickly spread throughout the ship.

³ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 89.

⁴ A. Matiushenko, "Epizod 14 iūnia na eskadrennom bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii," Iskra, No. 105, July 15, 1905, p. 2. Most of the details about the events of June 14 are taken from the account of Matiushenko as he alone of the major memoirists was on deck during the entire affair.

⁵ V.I. Nevskii, ed., Vosstanie na bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii (Moscow—Petrograd, 1924), p. 232.

⁶ A. Matiushenko, "Pravda o vosstanii na bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii," in Nevskii, p. 293.

Soon a crowd of sailors, murmuring and grumbling, gathered to confirm the news. Word of the crew's unrest and its cause reached Captain Golikov through the officer of the watch, Ensign Liventsov. Golikov sent the Senior Surgeon, Titular Councillor Smirnov, to check. Smirnov reportedly "put on his pince-nez in order to see the worms better, turned the meat about in front of his nose, and sniffed."⁷ He announced that the meat was not bad, that the worms should be washed off with salt water, then the meat would be perfectly good.⁸ The crew's reaction to this was as can be expected, there were more grumblings and protests. Consequently, Golikov stationed a sentry near the meat, armed with a pencil and paper and orders to write down the name of any sailor who approached.

Lunch was to be served at 11:00 A.M. The sailors answered the first whistle which signalled vodka rations, but ignored the second which called them to soup.⁹ Instead, they simply ate their bread and drank water. The Senior Officer, Captain of the Second Rank Gilarovskii, entered the kitchen and asked the cook, Ivan Daniliuk why he had not served the borshch. Daniliuk answered that the crew refused to eat

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Platonov, p. 45.

⁹ Kirill [A.P. Berezovskii], Drama na Tendrovskoi bukhte (2nd ed., Moscow, 1934), p. 50.

their soup since the meat in it was wormy, and that they were asking for tea and butter instead.¹⁰ Gilarovskii departed for the wardroom where the officers were assembled eating lunch. There he confronted Smirnov with the crew's refusal to eat its borshch. Smirnov reiterated what he had previously reported, that the meat only needed washing to make it perfectly edible. A witness to this scene, Lieutenant Aleksandr Kovalenko, noted that Gilarovskii hesitated as if undecided, but did not question Smirnov's judgment further.¹¹ Gilarovskii then reported the crew's attitude to Captain Golikov, who ordered the crew assembled immediately.

There has been an attempt to portray the refusal of the crew to eat the borshch as a prearranged plan. Kirill states that the silent refusal to eat was arranged by the "revolutionary sailors" aboard the Potemkin, who did not want to create a disturbance which might upset the planned mutiny of the entire Black Sea Fleet, and yet at the same time wanted to maintain their prestige as leaders of the crew.¹² Thus the refusal was seen as a strategic compromise. But Matiushenko, S. Denisenko, and K. Perelygin, who were members of the crew as Kirill was not, make no mention of any such agreement.¹³ The testimony of

¹⁰ Matiushenko, Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

¹¹ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 89.

¹² Kirill, Drama, p. 50.

¹³ S. Denisenko, Katorga i ssylka, No. 5, 1925, pp. 28-42, and K. Perelygin, "K sobytiiu na eskadrennom bronenostse Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii," in V.I. Nevskii, p. 229.

both Matiushenko and Denisenko is of particular value, as they were "revolutionary sailors" and later members of the committee set up by the mutineers.

Within minutes of the signal for assembly, the crew was lined up, one watch on either side of the quarterdeck. Captain Golikov mounted a capstan to address them. He warned that disorders were totally inadmissible aboard a fighting ship, and threatened them with the yardarm if the disturbances continued.¹⁴ Then he ordered all those who were willing to eat the borsch to step forward: very few did.¹⁵ Seeing this, Golikov called out the guard. According to Matiushenko, the sailors knew that this meant each one of them would be interrogated and dealt with individually.¹⁶ Consequently the sailors, frightened, rushed together in a group at the gun turret. Gilarovskii shouted "Enough!" and he and Ensign Liventsov stepped in to halt the rush of men to the battery. They succeeded in barring the paths of a group of twenty to thirty men from the second watch who were attempting to join the others. Gilarovskii ordered the guard to surround the smaller group of men and Liventsov to take their names. Suddenly, without any

¹⁴ M.I. Lebedev, Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie sredi chernomorskikh moriakov v 1905 godu (Moscow, 1925), p. 12.

¹⁵ It is impossible to determine the number of men who stepped forward. It seems to have been somewhere between ten and twenty, and to have consisted of ranks which had seen longer service than the ordinary conscripts. Cf. Platonov, p. 46.

¹⁶ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 53.

further provocation,¹⁷ Gilarovskii ordered "Boatswain, bring a tarpaulin!"¹⁸ The bulk of the men, huddled together against the turret, feared that this was the prelude to a mass execution as the Russian Navy traditionally covered those about to be shot. From out of the general muttering, one voice was heard above the rest, "They are going to shoot them! But we can't let them!" And then "To the guns."¹⁹

The sailors threw themselves at the turret where the rifles were stacked in a pyramid. The sailors seized the rifles, but as there were no cartridges they were forced to run to the gun deck where they broke open the cartridge room.

In the meantime, Gregorii Vakulenchuk, one of the sailors surrounded by the guard, and Gilarovskii were confronting each other. Gilarovskii, in desperation, ordered the guard to fire. The guard did not move. Once more Gilarovskii ordered them to fire, then in a fury tore a rifle from the hands of one of the guards. Instantly, Vakulenchuk also seized a guard's rifle, and disappeared behind the central battery.²⁰

¹⁷ Kirill suggests the guard may have been hesitant in carrying out Gilarovskii's order. Kirill, Drama, p. 53.

¹⁸ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 295. Hough wrote that the tarpaulin was brought and the men actually covered by it. This would not seem to be the case. Hough, The Potemkin Mutiny, p. 22.

¹⁹ Kirill, Drama, p. 54. Hough has Matiushenko both as the Social Democrat leader aboard the Potemkin, and as the organizer of the mutiny. Neither is fact. Hough, p. 21.

²⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 56.

Sailors returning from the gundeck had finally succeeded in loading their rifles. Matiushenko, running along the deck after the artillery officer, Lieutenant Neupokoev, shot him in the back of the head. Dropping his rifle, Matiushenko grabbed Neupokoev by the foot, dragged him to the rail, and shoved him overboard. Continuing around the turret, he came upon Gilarovskii, rifle in hand, standing over Vakulenchuk who was lying on the deck in a pool of blood. Vakulenchuk had been mortally wounded by a shot in the chest.

Gilarovskii and Matiushenko exchanged shots, each missing once, before Gilarovskii ran off around the turret with Matiushenko after him. "Kill him!" Gilarovskii shouted to a guard, but the man dropped his rifle and fled. Gilarovskii scooped up the rifle and inexplicably was firing at the fleeing guard when Matiushenko shot him in the back. Gilarovskii fell to the deck. Seeing who had shot him, he cried, "I know you, you scoundrel, when we get ashore I'll pay you for this!" Matiushenko answered, "But first I'll send you to Makarov as a student!",²¹ and with these words, he pushed Gilarovskii overboard.

By this time the mutiny had spread throughout the ship, a hunt for officers was underway while sailors lined the rails shooting at officers who had jumped overboard in an attempt to swim to safety.

Suddenly, Lieutenant Wilhelm Ton appeared on deck. There were shouts in favor of throwing him overboard, but when Ton indicated he

²¹ Matiushenko, *Iskra*, No. 105, p. 2. Makarov was the Russian admiral who was blown up with his ship in Port Arthur harbor.

wished to speak to Matiushenko, the sailors agreed. Ton was considered a wise and energetic officer, fair though strict, and a large part of the crew respected him.²² The two had gone a little aside from the others, over to the turret, when Ton whipped out a pistol and fired twice at Matiushenko. The first shot missed, wounding a nearby sailor in the hand, the second grazed Matiushenko's forehead. Matiushenko, who was still carrying his rifle, raised it and shot Ton.²³ Sailors standing nearby also reacted quickly, Matiushenko's shot was closely followed by a succession from other rifles. Ton's body was also tossed over the side.

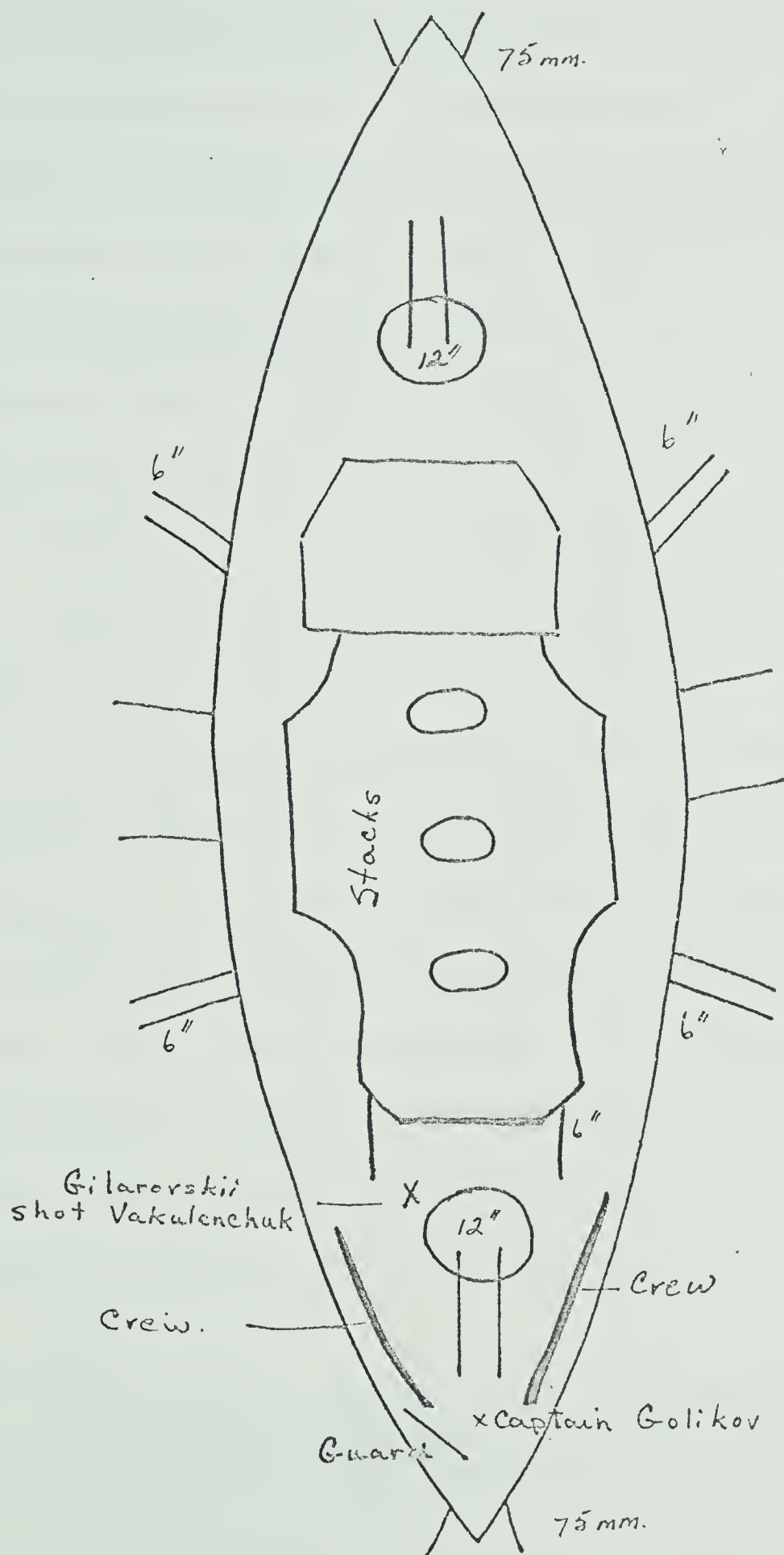
Up to this point the executions had a more or less chance character, those officers who had remained on deck or had attempted to escape by jumping overboard had been shot at in the excitement of the moment. Now the killing took on a more deliberate aspect as the crew began demanding the captain, Golikov. After a search, he was discovered in the admiral's cabin. A group of sailors ordered him to

²² Kirill, Drama, p. 58.

²³ Matiushenko, Iskra, No. 105, p. 2. Why did Ton attempt to shoot Matiushenko? Perhaps Matiushenko made a threatening gesture, perhaps Ton hoped to restore order by eliminating the ringleader of the mutiny. That he recognized Matiushenko as such is clear from Ton's request to speak to him alone. Hough wrote that the shooting incident took place inside the turret, and suggests that Matiushenko deliberately murdered Ton. These statements are without foundation. Hough, p. 29.

Main deck of the Potemkin

modified from Jane's Fighting Ships, 1906, page 276



open the door but he refused until they began to break it down. Golikov had obviously been intending to jump overboard, as he finally appeared on deck "in the costume of our forefather Adam."²⁴ With his appearance on deck, the crew began to shout for his death, while Golikov begged Matiushenko to forgive him.²⁵ Matiushenko supposedly replied that he had nothing against Golikov personally, that his fate depended on the crew. Golikov was led a short way down the deck, shot, and his body tossed overboard.

But the violence had reached its peak. The emergency past, the men returned to a calmer frame of mind and there were to be no more killings.

All this time the torpedo boat 267 had been anchored close to the Potemkin. It took no action during the mutiny -- the situation aboard the Potemkin was unclear, and as the only action they could have taken would have been to torpedo the Potemkin, the commander preferred to wait. The 267 was the haven most of the escaping officers sought when they dived overboard off the Potemkin. Now that those who were going to jump overboard had presumably done so, the 267 weighed anchor and began to swing past the Potemkin in a large circle. But,

²⁴ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 297. This phrase was most likely for effect, elsewhere Matiushenko says Golikov was wearing at least a shirt. Matiushenko, Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

²⁵ Kirill, Drama, p. 60.

someone aboard the Potemkin noticed the torpedo boat's attempt to depart, presumably to carry news of the mutiny to Sevastopol (the 267 had no wireless equipment). Three warning shots roared out, fired from one of the Potemkin's 75 millimetre guns.²⁶ Chastened, the 267 returned to the Potemkin, bow on to show her peaceful intentions.²⁷ Three officers came aboard the Potemkin from the 267: the commander of the torpedo boat, Lieutenant Baron Klodt von Iurgensburg, and two officers from the Potemkin, Warrant Officer Makarov and Ensign Vakhtin who had been seriously wounded in the head.²⁸ A cry went up that all three should be killed, especially Makarov, who as the inspector, was considered responsible for purchasing the rotten meat. Saner opinions prevailed, or as Matiushenko wrote, "the true fighters for the people and for freedom" stepped in and declared that the revolution need not spill more blood.²⁹

More officers were found in hiding and dragged forth to be placed under arrest. Two of them, Lieutenant Kovalenko and Lieutenant Kharkevich, were discovered in the water by the wooden target. They and one other officer, Lieutenant Grigorev, had been eating in the

²⁶ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 92.

²⁷ Kirill, Drama, p. 62. The 267 did not have torpedo tubes in her bow.

²⁸ Matiushenko, Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

²⁹ Ibid.

wardroom when they heard the shooting and jumped overboard. Grigorev was killed immediately as the crew opened fire on them, but the other two escaped injury. Kovalenko was popular with his men and normally would have feared nothing from them, but in the "irrepressible hurricane of violent passion and elemental instincts,"³⁰ who was going to distinguish between individual officers? So Kovalenko jumped overboard and lived to be one of the leaders of the Potemkin. For, as he was weighing his chances to swim ashore from the target, some of his men recognized him and began to call, "Engineer Mechanic Kovalenko! Sir! Lieutenant Kovalenko!"³¹

Kovalenko raised himself up out of the water to stand on the target. In answer to Kharkevich's query, he replied that they would not have called him if they intended to harm him. "What do you want?"

"Come back to us! We won't hurt you."³²

Having been assured that Kharkevich was included in the invitation, the two began to swim back to the Potemkin. Immediately the crew began to shout again. They were to wait, and the cutter was sent for them.³³

In the meantime Ensign Alekseev had appeared before Matiushenko

³⁰ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 92.

³¹ Ibid., p. 93.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

and the other sailors on deck, pleading not to be killed. Good-naturedly, the sailors reassured him that they would not kill him if he would take them to Odessa.³⁴ They were appointing him commander of the ship. There is some suggestion that he protested,³⁵ but it seems more likely he accepted, grateful to be spared.

Two more officers had died: Ensign Levintsov, presumably shot after he dived overboard, and Senior Surgeon Smirnov, reportedly by suicide. As Kovalenko points out, however, it was extremely unlikely that a surgeon should choose to shoot himself in the stomach, causing a very painful wound and one unlikely to prove immediately fatal.³⁶ It is more likely that he was shot deliberately by one of the sailors while he was hiding in his cabin.

The remaining officers were placed under arrest and confined to the wardroom. At 4:00 P.M. the Potemkin weighed anchor and set sail for Odessa where -- thanks to the 267's voyage -- the sailors knew a strike was in progress. Once more the crew was assembled on the quarter deck where Matiushenko made a speech explaining the revolutionary significance of the mutiny to the assembled sailors, and announcing that the rest of the fleet would join them in Odessa.³⁷ A

³⁴ Matiushenko, Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

³⁵ Nevskii, p. 236.

³⁶ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 99.

³⁷ Denisenko, Katorga i ssylka, No. 5, 1925, p. 34.

committee was elected to run the ship,³⁸ but important decisions were to be reached by popular vote at mass meetings. The mutiny had become a revolution in miniature.

Kirill estimated that there were only twenty men aboard the Potemkin who were revolutionaries. Of the crew, a further three hundred were dissatisfied with life in the navy, while the remainder was in opposition to the mutiny.³⁹ As a Social Democrat who had every reason to portray the Potemkin incident as a revolutionary upheaval rather than as a simple mutiny, Kirill would be unlikely to underestimate the level of conscious revolutionary intent among the sailors.

Moreover, it is obvious that the crew rebelled spontaneously in face of a threat to their very lives -- as soon as the threat was eliminated, the killing stopped. The readiness with which they rebelled reflected conditions in Russia and in the navy: the unsuccessful war, the general discontent, and the revolutionary unrest. After all, whether a general mutiny had been planned or not, rumors to this effect had

³⁸ The committee was made up of torpedo quartermaster 1st class A. Matiushenko, torpedo quartermaster 1st class S. Denisenko, drill quartermaster 2nd class I. Dymchenko, machinist Kulik, torpedo quartermaster 2nd class Lychev, torpedo quartermaster 2nd class Tskrebnev, holder Nikishkin, fireman Volobuev, machinist Mikhailov, fireman quartermaster 2nd class Fishkov, fireman quartermaster 2nd class Zinov'ev, torpedoman Tsirkunov, machine torpedoman Makarov, artilleryman Golovko, steering quartermaster Kostenko, and two others whom Matiushenko was unable to identify. Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 299. Later others were invited to join: Kovalenko, Kirill, and Feldman.

³⁹ Kirill, Drama, p. 45.

been spread and the possibility had been suggested to some of the crew. But why did the officers, particularly Gilarovskii, behave in a fashion which could only trigger an incident?

Why would a quiet preference not to eat be considered an act of insubordination? The mass refusal to eat inferred organization. That an organization existed seems unlikely, however what is important was an appearance of organization, especially if Gilarovskii believed Smirnov's evaluation of the state of the meat. It seems from Kovalenko's testimony that Gilarovskii may have had doubts, but could hardly have asked a fellow officer if he were telling the truth. ~~While~~ If Smirnov had had the courage to reverse himself and had admitted the meat was unfit for consumption, the matter might have ended differently. After all, in a similar incident aboard the Berezan in 1903, fresh supplies were procured and order restored.

The decisive factor in the whole story was conditions in Russia. No less than the sailors, the officers were aware of the unrest in the country and of the discontent in the navy. The officers may even have heard the rumors about a general mutiny in the Black Sea Fleet. Certainly they were aware of the agitation among the sailors; the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Chukhnin, had just left Sevastopol for St. Petersburg to report on political conditions in the fleet and to advise on measures to combat the revolutionary movement there.⁴⁰ There is

⁴⁰ Naida, Znamia, No. 12, 1955, p. 153.

no reason to doubt that Gilarovskii felt action must be taken immediately to squash any further revolutionary action.

But why did he call for the tarpaulin? Tantamount to an order for execution, this was the spark which set off the Potemkin mutiny. Did he intend to execute these men? It is difficult to see what else he intended -- except perhaps to frighten the crew into complete submission. One writer believes Gilarovskii worked himself into a rage and lost control of himself,⁴¹ but he was an experienced officer and thus this seems unlikely. The question is insoluble as Gilarovskii was killed before he had a chance to carry out his intentions.

⁴¹ Kirill, Drama, p. 54.

CHAPTER III

EVENTS IN ODESSA

Odessa, the fourth largest city in the Russian Empire, was in the throes of a general strike when the Potemkin anchored in her outer harbor at ten o'clock on the night of June 14. As the Adjutant General, Count Ignat'ev, reported to the Tsar,

Odessa had long been known as one of the most dangerous revolutionary centers because of her large trading port, and because of her varied population which presented unusually fertile ground for revolutionary propaganda.¹

Up until this time, the major outburst in Odessa had been a general strike in 1903 which had spread from the city to all the larger centers of southern Russia.²

In 1905, Odessa had met the news of Bloody Sunday with apparent apathy. Some leaflets were put out by the local Social Democrats but they elicited no response.³ It was not until March that

¹ Report of the Adjutant-General, Count Ignat'ev to the Tsar, June 18, 1905, in "Bronenosets Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii v Odesse," edited by M. Inozemtsev, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 90.

² J. L. H. Keep, The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia (Oxford, 1963), p. 72. A Zubatovist organization in Odessa, the Independents, led by a Jewish doctor named Shaevich helped set off this conflagration. Keep, p. 105.

³ Institut istorii partii TsK KP Ukrainy, Listovki bol'shevikov Ukrainy perioda pervoi Russkoi revoliutsii, 1905-1907 (Kiev, 1955), pp. 39, 41, 48.

strikes occurred which grew in intensity in late April and early May.⁴ Twenty-five thousand workers took part in the May strike, which nonetheless did not become general. An estimated one-third of Odessa workers were involved in this strictly economic strike.⁵ One party worker, L. Shkolovskii, explained how he "gradually led" a gathering of workers to make political demands such as "freedom of strikes, meetings, speech, union." Gradualness was necessary, he felt, since at that time "all the working mass still feared politics."⁶

The May strikes spilled over into June and helped touch off the June Days. On Sunday, June 12, thirty-two workers' delegates were arrested at a meeting on the orders of the chief of the Odessa Okhrana who believed they were preparing a general strike.⁷

The next morning, a crowd of 500 to 600 workers gathered at the Gena agricultural implements factory in the industrial suburb of

⁴ O. Chaadaeva, ed., "Iz istorii rabocheho dvizheniia na Ukraine v 1905 g.," Krasnyi arkhiv, No. 102, 1940, p. 81.

⁵ S. Shriber, "Partiinaiarabota v Odesse: pervaiia polovina 1905 goda," Letopis revoliutsii, Nos. 5-6, 1925, p. 141.

⁶ L. Shkolovskii, "Vospominaniia o 1905 g.," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 11, 1925, p. 258.

⁷ Document 169, Representation of the procurator of the Odessa district court to the procurator of the Odessa courthouse, June 14, 1905, in Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 gg. na Ukraine, Vol. II, Part 1, Revoliutsionnaia bor'ba na Ukraine v period pervoi russkoi revoliutsiia : 1905 (Kiev, 1955), p. 226. Hough, p. 44, wrote of the arrest of the workers' delegates on June 12, then goes on to date the origin of disturbances from June 25. He has obviously confused Old Style dates with New Style.

Peresyp to protest the arrest of their delegates. There were Social Democrats in the crowd, but the demonstration was completely spontaneous.⁸ Ordered to disperse by an officer of the Peresyp police district, they refused and began to throw stones at him. This was at 9:00 A.M. At noon a detachment of Cossacks was called in as the crowd continued to grow. The Cossacks were also met with a hail of stones. Their commander warned the crowd that they were to quiet down, otherwise he would signal three times, and on the third blast of the trumpet he would order his troops to fire. In answer, the mob increased the rock bombardment, knocking the commander from his horse and injuring another officer.⁹ There were even reports of pistol shots fired from the crowd.¹⁰ The Cossacks fled only to regroup and to fire at the mob.¹¹ Two workers were killed and an unknown number wounded. The crowd fled. Disturbances continued throughout the city; complete order was not restored until 7:00 P.M.¹²

⁸ "Iiul'skie dni v Odesse," Iskra, No. 105, July 15, 1905, p. 6. Someone on the editorial board of Iskra must have made a mistake. The title should read Iiunskie (June) not Iiulskie (July) as the item definitely refers to the June Days. Also "Vosstanie v Odesse," Iskra, No. 104, July 1, 1905, p. 3.

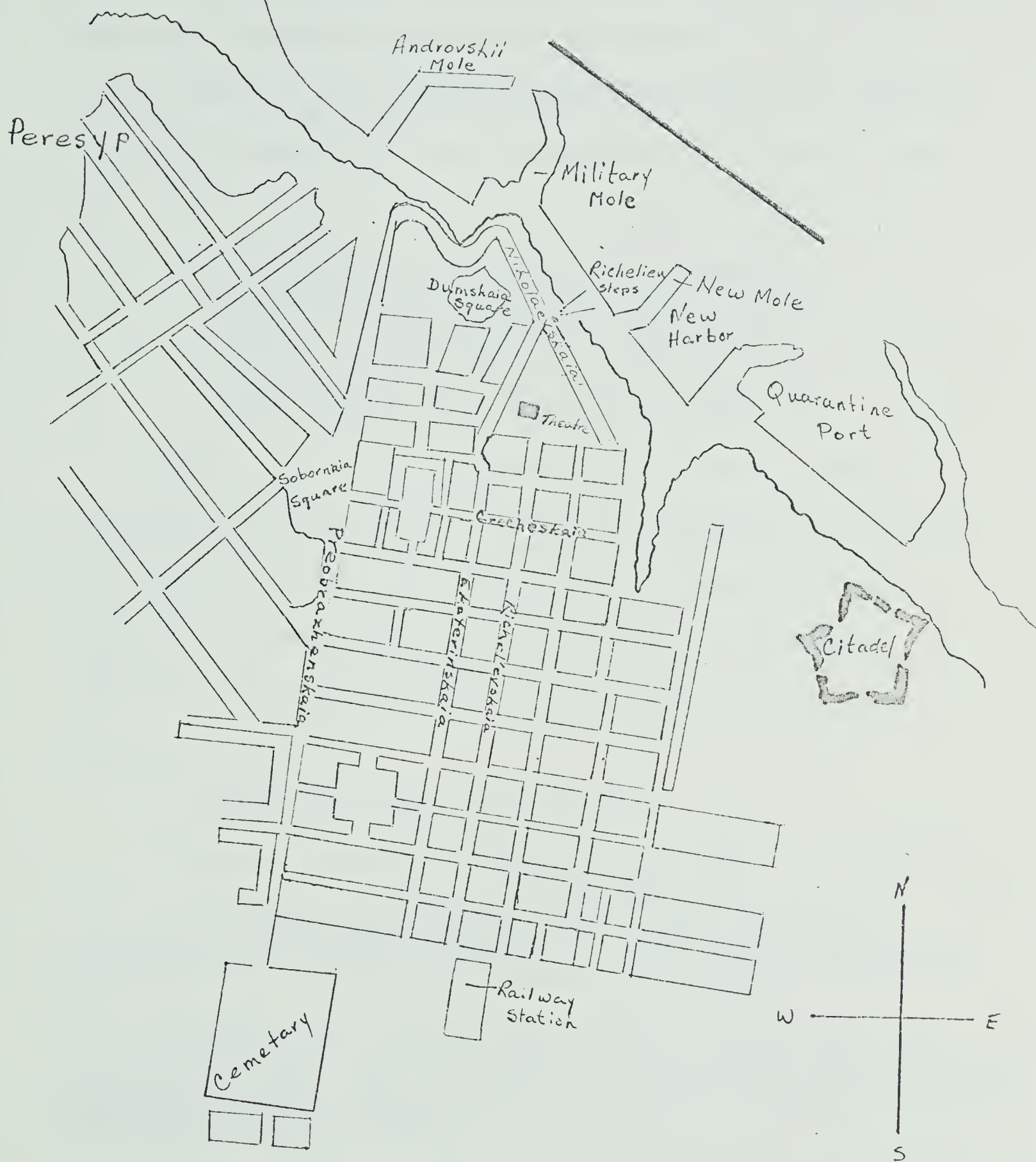
⁹ Document 169, Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, p. 226.

¹⁰ Report of the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Bezradetskii, in "Bronenosets Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii v Odesse," Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 75.

¹¹ Platonov, p. 56.

¹² Document 169, Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, p. 226.

Map of Odessa



When the news of the shooting reached the Social Democrats, they decided to call the workers to a general strike.¹³ This was hardly necessary since everyone, including the authorities, expected fresh disturbances.¹⁴ Placards were posted on the morning of June 14:

Yesterday in a conflict between the troops and the people, two workmen were killed and three wounded. The Governor calls upon peaceful citizens, for the avoidance of accidents, to abstain from joining the crowds of workingmen, and to disperse at the request of the police.¹⁵

By noon of June 14, a crowd estimated at 2,000 had gathered once again at the Gena factory.¹⁶ Someone suggested that they should go into the city to call out the other workers in sympathy with their murdered comrades. The mob poured into the city, summoning workers as it went and swelling in size.¹⁷ Another group of men,

¹³ "Iiulskie dni," Iskra, No. 105, p. 6.

¹⁴ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 76.

¹⁵ C. Feldman, The Revolt of the Potemkin, translated by Constance Garnett (London, 1908), p. 8. This notice also appeared in the newspapers. Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, p. 76.

¹⁶ Document 170, Report of the inspector of the Kherson police district to the chief of the Odessa Okhrana, June 14, 1905, in Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, p. 227. The workers were from the Shpolianskii, Levin, Napilnikov, and Kamel works.

¹⁷ Document 176, intercepted letter about the building of barricades in the streets of Odessa, June 15, 1905, in Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 gg.: dokumenty i materialy, Vol. II, Part 2, Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii vesnoi i letom 1905 g.: aprel i sentiabr (Moscow, 1959), p. 258.

apparently waiting for revolutionary leaflets on the corner of Rishchelevskaia and Grecheskaia streets, was dispersed by the police. A crowd collected again, then the police appeared and with no warning, fired. The crowd began to retreat and then fled. No one was hurt.¹⁸

Throughout the day the crowds gathered on the main streets, but were broken up by Cossacks. The strike soon engulfed the entire city as shops and banks closed, and the crowds halted and overturned horse trams and streetcars and even interfered with the passage of trains. The tram service was finally suspended.¹⁹

By two o'clock it was necessary to strengthen the troops in the city, additional soldiers were billeted in Sobornaia Square. According to official reports, bullets were used on June 14 only against the crowds in Meshanskaia Square, where barricades had been set up. It was claimed that the workers fired first -- they had a few revolvers -- but fled when the Cossacks returned their fire.²⁰

At 10:15 P.M. a bomb exploded in Sobornaia Square killing both the man who was carrying it, Mordka Tsipkin, and the policeman, Pavlovskii, who had stopped him. But this was the last incident of the

¹⁸ "Vosstanie v Odesse," Iskra, No. 104, July 1, 1905, p. 2.

¹⁹ Document 174, Representation No. 2307 of the procurator of the Odessa district court, N.M. Levchenko, June 14, 1905, in Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 gg., p. 257.

²⁰ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 76.

day; by eleven o'clock the crowds had dispersed leaving the streets to the police and the Cossacks.

In the excitement, the arrival of the Potemkin and the 267 in the Odessa Roads passed unnoticed.

The strike had reached a turning point. In Feldman's words: "The strike could not be prolonged on pacific lines: it had reached its logical end. Now it must pass into armed conflict -- or cease."²¹ But it seemed impossible to "pass into armed conflict" since the first defect of the revolutionary parties had become apparent -- they were unable to supply the workers with weapons. Although the workers' mood may have been one of "strongest agitation,"²² their inability to engage the forces of authority "paralysed their revolutionary energy."²³

There is no question that the crowds were broken up very easily, that "they ran -- ran before a handful of men whom they could have overpowered with their bare hands."²⁴ Even the barricades were "toys" constructed mainly by adolescents.²⁵ The authorities felt the lack of resolve on the part of the strikers and refrained from inciting the crowds by violence. In all but the incident on Meshanskaia Square, the police

²¹ Feldman, p. 13.

²² Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 76.

²³ "Iiulskie dni," Iskra, No. 105, p. 6.

²⁴ Feldman, p. 10.

²⁵ "Vosstanie v Odesse," Iskra, No. 104, p. 3.

and the Cossacks had fired blanks to disperse the crowds. While there is no mention of this in the official reports, it was assumed by witnesses, since so few people were killed on June 14.²⁶ No regular troops were used that day although they were kept in readiness.²⁷

A general mood of discouragement had settled over the revolutionaries when, early in the morning of June 15, it was discovered that the battleship anchored in the Odessa Roads was in the hands of her crew. Here was the force and the weapons necessary to turn the strike into an armed uprising. The Mensheviks reported that they received the news about 2:00 A.M.,²⁸ while the civil authorities apparently knew nothing of the mutiny of the Potemkin until 6:00 A.M., after the body of Gregorii Vakulenchuk was brought ashore. By that time a crowd had already gathered in the port, a crowd so large that troops were ordered out.²⁹ The authorities were as quick as the revolutionaries to recognize the significance of the battleship to future events. At 9:15 A.M. the governor of the city turned over all authority for the settlement and the preservation of order to the military.³⁰

²⁶ "Iulskie dni," Iskra, No. 105, p. 3.

²⁷ "Vosstanie v Odesse," Iskra, No. 104, p. 3.

²⁸ "Odesskoe vosstanie," Iskra, No. 103, June 21, 1905, p. 4.

²⁹ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 77.

³⁰ Ibid.

The crowd in the port continued to grow as the word spread. People flocked to stare at the Potemkin and to pay homage to Vakulenchuk. He lay in state on the New Mole, surrounded by an armed guard of sailors, with a note pinned to his chest explaining how he had died.

By 10:00 A.M. the detachment of Cossacks stationed in the port area withdrew after attempting unsuccessfully to remove Vakulenchuk's body.³¹ The police were withdrawn at the same time on the orders of the military commander because of the difficulty of acting against the masses of people.³² The city itself was peaceful, and empty of crowds.³³

In the port various orators harangued the crowd, but the mood there was more that of a holiday than of a revolution. The harbor was full of small craft taking sightseers and gifts of food to the Potemkin. The visitors made their way aboard, where they swarmed over everything until the exasperated sailors demanded that they leave.

The military command, in a dilemma regarding the Potemkin, decided not to risk antagonizing her by attempting to clear the port. Instead, at 5:00 P.M., troops were posted along the height of land commanding the port with orders to prevent people from moving

³¹ Document No. 177, Telegram of the procurator of the Odessa courthouse, A.I. Pollan, to the Minister of Justice, C.C. Manukhin, June 15, 1905 in Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 gg., p. 259.

³² Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p.77.

³³ Ibid.

between the port and the city. It was hoped to contain the disorders in this way.³⁴ The crowd, however, turned to pillage.

It is not known who began the looting. The most obvious explanation, and the official version, was that some of the crowd broke into a wine warehouse and that the rest of the mob was quick to follow their lead.³⁵ Most of the revolutionaries, however, blamed provocateurs.³⁶ There had certainly been attempts to divert the crowd by inciting it to a pogrom, but the agitators had been killed by the mob.³⁷ It is unlikely that the agitators were port guards,³⁸ but not unlikely that they were government agents or Black Hundredists. Perhaps after their failure to start a pogrom, the authorities sought to divert the mob by encouraging it to a "wild bacchanalian orgy."³⁹ But since the orgy predictably degenerated into arson and violence which the authorities wished to avoid, it is unlikely that they promoted the looting. A third and most probable explanation was that hoodlum elements in the mob seized the opportunity for looting.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁵ Report of Ignat'ev, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 93.

³⁶ "Odesskoe vosstanie," Iskra, No. 103, p. 4.

³⁷ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 83.

³⁸ "Odesskoe vosstanie," Iskra, No. 103, p. 4.

³⁹ Platonov, p. 66.

Sometime after dark, fires were started which were to burn all night and ravish the harbor area. Panic stricken members of the crowd, attempting to flee the port, were stopped by the troops who had orders to prevent the passage of people to and from the port area. It was not until considerably later, at 1:00 A.M., that troops were sent into the port in an effort to protect the buildings.⁴⁰ Firing continued sporadically throughout the night in the port, and in the city following a bomb throwing incident in which six Cossacks and eight horses were hurt. It has been estimated that there were 12,000 people in the port the night of June 15-16,⁴¹ but the count of those killed varies greatly. An official document lists only forty-eight citizens killed in the entire period of June 13-20.⁴² The lowest estimate is twenty killed,⁴³ while the highest contemporary count gives several hundred as the toll.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 81.

⁴¹ Kirill, Drama, p. 196.

⁴² Document 183, Representation of the Odessa district court, June 21, 1905, in Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, p. 245.

⁴³ Kirill, Drama, p. 196.

⁴⁴ "Pravitel'stvennoe soobshchenie," Pravo, No. 25, 1905, p. 2058. For some reason secondary accounts of events in Odessa during the June Days place the number of killed much higher. S. Harcave, First Blood (London, 1964), p. 157, wrote that 2,000 people died the night of the port fire. Richard Hough, pp. 70-73 described an incident which supposedly took place the afternoon of the port fire in which two detachments of Cossacks trapped the crowd between them and massacred 6,000 people. This "Richelieu Steps" incident has no basis in historical fact. It would seem to have originated with Eisenstein's film "The Battleship Potemkin" in which this massacre is shown.

In the morning some fires were still burning, but the city was quiet. Soldiers were everywhere, the city was under martial law. The shops were shut, the street cars were not running. "And the battleship still stood in the harbor. Now, all hope, every hope, revolved exclusively around her."⁴⁵

* * *

Strikes had been a chronic problem in Odessa since March 1905. Since that time the police and the administration had had to turn to the military for assistance a number of times. "For the past four or five months," according to Lieutenant General Bezradetskii, "not a day passed that the military was not called out in aid of the civil authorities."⁴⁶ In June, as the discontent rose, the troops were called out more often and longer,⁴⁷ until early in the morning of June 15 the civil authorities turned over the administration of the city to the military in the person of General Kakhanov.⁴⁸ It was on military orders that the police were pulled out of the port while the command

⁴⁵ "Vosstanie v Odesse," Iskra, No. 104, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Document No. 177, Revoliutsiia 1905-1907 gg., p. 259.

considered the dilemma: whether to use troops from the garrison to disperse the mob in the port -- perhaps spreading the disorders throughout the city while also risking a bombardment from the Potemkin -- or to leave the port in the hands of the mob for the time and thus localize the disorders.⁴⁹ The latter alternative was followed. The authorities were very conscious that the disturbances, supported by the Potemkin, might spread.

It was decided to strengthen the Odessa garrison against a possible landing by the sailors in conjunction with the arming of the workers by the Potemkin. At the same time heavy artillery was sent to Odessa for use against the Potemkin itself.⁵⁰ Telegrams were sent informing both the War Ministry and the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet of the mutiny aboard the Potemkin.⁵¹ Until this time neither was aware of the event. Only the squadron could deal effectively with the Potemkin, and until it did so, the military could only play for time, while trying not to antagonize the Potemkin. "It was completely clear to the military command that, on that day, the commanding position was unconditionally that of the mutinous sailors of the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii."⁵² This thought was to govern the actions

⁴⁹ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 77

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 80.

of the military for the duration of the Potemkin's sojourn in Odessa.

At 9:30 A.M. on June 16, General Kakhanov received a telegram from Vice Admiral Kriger, acting commander in Sevastopol during Chukhnin's absence, stating that a squadron under the command of Rear Admiral Vishnevskii was being sent against the Potemkin and would arrive the afternoon of June 16.⁵³

In answer to a telegram requesting that the Odessa district be placed under martial law, Kakhanov received the following telegram:

Quickly take the strictest measures for the suppression of the uprising both on the Potemkin and among the population of the port. Each hour of delay might cost torrents of blood in the future. Nicholas.⁵⁴

Odessa was under martial law and the military was at last preparing to deal with a revolutionary situation.

* * *

In June 1905, six revolutionary organizations existed in Odessa. The Social Democrats had been split from January 3, 1905 into the Bolshevik "Committee of the R.S.D.R.P." and the Menshevik "Group

⁵³ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

of the R.S.D.R.P. " In addition there were the organizations of the Bund, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Anarchist-Communists , and the Paleo-Zionists.⁵⁵ Influence was also still exerted by the defunct Zubatovist organization of Dr. Shaevich, particularly in the workers' suburb of Peresyp.⁵⁶ Since the label of Zubatovism was used to excuse both the workers' concern with economic, rather than political demands, and the weakness of workers support for the Social Democrats,⁵⁷ its influence is likely exaggerated.

Odessa Social Democratic supporters in the summer of 1905 numbered 750 Mensheviks and 350 Bolsheviks.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, there are no figures available for the other organizations, but since there was a sizable Jewish population in Odessa, it is reasonable to assume that the Bund enjoyed considerable support.

It was these three organizations: the Bund, the Mensheviks, and the Bolsheviks, that had formed a short lived "United Commission" in an attempt to supply leadership to the strikers in May.⁵⁹ The arrival

⁵⁵ Kirill, Drama, p. 185.

⁵⁶ N. Avdeev, "Vosstanie na bronenostse Potemkin, "in 1905; Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v otdelnykh ocherkakh, ed. by M. N. Pokrovskii (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926), p. 196.

⁵⁷ Nevskii, p. 171.

⁵⁸ Shriber, Letopis revoliutsii, Nos. 5-6, 1925, p. 149.

⁵⁹ Nevskii, p. 18. The commission was in existence only May 2-3, then broke up.

of the Potemkin and the revolutionary upsurge caused them to combine forces once again. The United Commission was re-formed June 15, as

the organizations did not feel themselves to be of a sufficiently strong character, nor authoratative enough with the masses, to take upon themselves this decisive leadership and responsibility.⁶⁰

After deliberation, the commission decided to send three representatives to the Potemkin with the proposal that part of the crew land. They would meet the crowds at Dumskaia Square and march into the city in order to seize the communications system and wreck the railroad. This would prevent more troops from being brought in. The representatives reached the port about noon, found a boat, and set off for the Potemkin.⁶¹

They returned shortly thereafter with the news that the sailors refused to land. They were expecting the squadron to arrive and needed to keep the Potemkin fully prepared for action. If they sent the most resolute sailors ashore, the remainder might not act decisively if it became necessary.⁶² The Potemkin would take action only when they were joined by the rest of the fleet, and even then the sailors felt that they were a strength only at sea.⁶³

⁶⁰ Shriber, Letopis revoliutsii, Nos. 5-6, 1925, p. 143.

⁶¹ "Iiulskie dni," Iskra, No. 105, p. 6.

⁶² A. Kanatchikov, The Revolt on the Armored Cruiser Potemkin (New York, n.d.), p. 13.

⁶³ "Iiulskie dni," Iskra, No. 105, p. 6.

The representatives made their report to a meeting of the United Commission at 5:00 P.M. The Commission decided that the population of Odessa was not yet in a bellicose mood. The city was peaceful, the strike general.⁶⁴ They would send the deputation back to the Potemkin with a proposal for future co-operation, and the request that the Potemkin not bombard Odessa without the agreement of the commission.⁶⁵

This was the leadership offered by the revolutionary parties. Events were never in their control, they acted only when the general strike was an accomplished fact, and then they were unable to read the mood of the people. The commission was deciding that the city was peaceful at practically the moment when looting broke out in the port! They were not even as acute as the authorities, especially as General Kakhanov. There was little immediate action that he could take, but he managed to keep the city relatively free from disorders by correctly gauging both the mood of the crowd, and the danger of revolutionary action.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE ODESSA ROADS

About 10:00 P.M., June 14, the Potemkin, attended by the 267, anchored in the outer roads of Odessa harbor. The cutter was sent into the city for supplies, but because of the strike was unable to obtain them.¹ The sailors, however, were able to order 100 puds of bread, potatoes and meat to be delivered in the morning. The shopkeepers were the regular fleet suppliers but knew nothing of the mutiny.² The sailors said their commander was Klodt von Iurgensburg,³ and the fact that they were unaccompanied by an officer aroused no suspicion.⁴ Aboard the Potemkin, six shells were ordered for each gun, five torpedo tubes loaded against possible attack, and the crew was ordered to sleep by their guns.⁵ The committee did not sleep at all, but gathered in the admiral's cabin to consider its course of action. They decided to take Vakulenchuk's body ashore, to write a detailed account of the events at Tendrovskii, to examine the officers, to address an appeal to the soldiers and Cossacks, and to get

¹ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 291.

² Feldman, p. 48. One pud is equal to 36 pounds.

³ Report of Ignat'ev, Krasnyi arkhiv, No. 2-3, 1935, p. 91.

⁴ Kirill, Drama, p. 65.

⁵ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 229.

in touch with the local Social Democrats.⁶ The ship would soon need coal and water in addition to provisions. It was decided to demand these supplies from the Odessa authorities on threat of bombardment.⁷ The ship's safe was opened and found to contain 27,000 roubles of ship's money and 4,600 roubles belonging to engineer mechanic Kharkevich. This money was returned to him. After 1,000 roubles were given to the wife of Gilarovskii and 2,000 to Alekseev,⁸ there was 24,000 roubles left; a sum adequate for a large supply of coal and provisions.⁹

At 5:00 A.M. on June 15 the cutter was sent for the supplies and to distribute the typewritten appeal to the soldiers and Cossacks (please see the Appendix).¹⁰ The sailors were also to contact the local Social Democrats.¹¹

At 6:00 A.M. the body of Gregorii Vakulenchuk was taken ashore. He was lying on a stretcher under an Imperial flag, and dressed in a

⁶ Feldman, p. 45.

⁷ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 229.

⁸ Ibid., p. 302. Matiushenko did not mention Alekseev by name. Alekseev was forced to stay aboard the Potemkin against his wishes when the other officers were put ashore. The money was for his family about whom he professed to be worried.

⁹ A rouble was worth approximately 2 shillings $1\frac{1}{2}$ pence, or 50 cents in 1906. Jane's Fighting Ships, p. 255.

¹⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 193.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 165.

clean uniform with his hands crossed over his chest.¹² Pinned to his chest was a note which read:

Citizens of Odessa, before you lies the body of a brutally murdered sailor, Gregorii Vakulenchuk, murdered by the senior officer of the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii because Vakulenchuk declared the borshch was bad. Cross yourself and say 'Peace to his ashes!'¹³

A guard of twelve sailors was left with the body to protect it from the Cossacks and the police. Later that morning the Cossacks attempted to remove the body but were driven off by the guard. Another appeal was drafted, which was sent to the French Consul although addressed to the citizens of Odessa, asking them to prevent the body from being disturbed (Please see the Appendix).¹⁴ A group of workers gathering in the port built a tent over Vakulinchuk's body.¹⁵ They besieged the guard with questions which the sailors answered readily. The sailors told the crowd of the events at Tendrovskii, and that their battleship was now at the service of the people in their fight for freedom, but that the Potemkin was in urgent need of coal, fresh water, and provisions.¹⁶

¹² Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 299.

¹³ Platonov, p. 61.

¹⁴ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 300.

¹⁵ Kirill, Drama, p. 67.

¹⁶ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 300.

On hearing this, some workers seized a collier and a water ship which were hauled to the Potemkin by the 267. The workers also helped the sailors to load the coal. Soon the harbor was dotted with small boats bringing gifts from the people of Odessa to the Potemkin: bread, tobacco, tea, sugar, meat, etc. These people climbed aboard and swarmed about the ship, curious about everything. They were merely sightseers but more serious-minded people came as well; members of the local revolutionary organizations and the representatives of the United Commission.¹⁷

An unknown number of revolutionaries came aboard.¹⁸ Kirill (A.P. Berezovskii) arrived with a Bundist friend. Some time later, Konstantin Feldman (known to the crew simply as "Student") was intercepted by Matiushenko in the cutter as he was attempting to reach the Potemkin. In the conversation which ensued, Matiushenko asked if Feldman were a Social Democrat. On receiving an affirmative answer, Matiushenko asked for proof. Feldman retorted, "Social Democrats don't have passports to show; they let us go to rot in Siberia and prison without them."¹⁹ Matiushenko, apparently pleased with the

¹⁷ Feldman, p. 38.

¹⁸ "K." [Kirill?], "Krasnyi Flot," Iskra, No. 105, July 15, 1905, p. 1. "K." estimates that five or six revolutionaries came aboard. K. Perelygin in Nevskii, p. 238, estimates thirty.

¹⁹ Feldman, p. 16.

reply, took him aboard the cutter and delivered him to the Potemkin.

These two men, Kirill and Feldman, along with one other whose identity is in dispute,²⁰ were the only landsmen allowed to remain aboard when the sailors, restless at the intrusion, demanded that all "volunteers" go ashore. They were invited to join the committee. As the third Social Democrat shortly left the Potemkin and did not reappear, it is Kirill and Feldman who are of interest. They were both Mensheviks who had come aboard without party authorization. Kirill was "a tall figure, with blunt features and a fair bushy beard, who looked like a typical peasant of Great Russia."²¹ He seems to have been an influential, respected man, and a steadying influence during the events aboard the Potemkin. Feldman was younger, Jewish, and an enthusiastic, eager revolutionary. He was above average height, with brown hair, a little beard and grey eyes.²²

²⁰ Kirill referred to the third Social Democrat aboard the Potemkin as Afanasii, and said he was a Bolshevik (Drama, p. 73). Feldman called him Comrade A. (Revolt, p. 54). In a letter to Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, V. Pleskov noted that in a collection on the Potemkin mutiny (Potemkinskie dni na Chernom more [Kharkov, 1925]), Kirill called the other Social Democrat Afanasii, saying this was a pseudonymn for a Bolshevik named Pleskov. V. Pleskov agreed that his pseudonymn was Afanasii, but says he was a Menshevik and not in Odessa until after the June Days. Furthermore, his brother, the only other Social Democrat in Odessa by the name of Pleskov, was in prison at the time. V. Pleskov, "K vosstaniiu na bronennostse Potemkin," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 2, 1926, pp.275-276.

²¹ Feldman, p. 51.

²² Pereygin in Nevskii, p. 338.

They both wanted the Potemkin's help for the revolutionary action in Odessa. Kirill suggested that the sailors descend on the city, arm the crowd and support the insurrection with their ship's guns.²³ Feldman's plans were similar but even more grandiose:

The sailors must at once be induced to land, to join the workmen, to take the town and set up a republic in Odessa, then to create out of the workmen a revolutionary army, and to march on, gradually extending the field of the insurrection and fortifying one position after the other for the revolution.²⁴

At the meeting of the committee with the representatives of the United Commission, Kirill supported the plan for common action. He pointed out that this was the time to carry it through; there was no artillery and few soldiers in Odessa. The authorities were totally unprepared for an invasion, but any delay would only strengthen them. The sailors, however, were not to be moved from their resolve to await the arrival of the remaining ships of the fleet. "If they [the squadron] joined, it would be easy to take Odessa; if not, then another plan would be needed."²⁵ The official Social Democratic representatives were requested to keep the Potemkin informed of the course of events in Odessa and to send a man to Sevastopol to inform the party there

²³ Kirill, Drama, p. 73.

²⁴ Feldman, pp. 16-17.

²⁵ Platonov, p. 64.

of the mutiny.²⁶ Kirill also requested his comrades to send leaflets and brochures for the sailors, as well as some street plans of Odessa.²⁷ Apparently he had not given up hope of inducing the sailors to land.

Once the "volunteers" had departed, the remainder of the afternoon was spent in a mass meeting of the sailors. The three Social Democrats harangued the crew in turn, Feldman for two hours by his own proud report.²⁸

Between four and five o'clock in the afternoon a cry of "Squadron!" was heard, and the men rushed to their stations. It was soon seen that far from being the squadron, the ship sighted was the Vekha, a small supply vessel for the Black Sea lighthouses. She was only lightly armed and no threat to the Potemkin.²⁹ The Potemkin raised the signal, "Commander to the ship," and the commander of the Vekha soon appeared on deck to make his report. He was at once arrested and another signal raised, "The commander requests his officers to come aboard."³⁰ They too were arrested. Disarmed, the officers were taken ashore and each given one hundred roubles from the Vekha's safe for their trip back to Sevastopol. From the captain it was learned

²⁶ Kirill, Drama, p. 74.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Feldman, p. 51.

²⁹ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 107.

³⁰ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 302.

that Madame Gilarovskii and her young daughter were aboard the Vekha. She was told that her husband was safe, having been put ashore on Tendrovskii Peninsula, and was taken ashore herself and given the money from the ship's fund.

After dark two soldiers in a boat asked permission to come aboard the Potemkin. They were from the Ismailovskii and Duniaskii regiments, sent to report that the soldiers were on the side of the Potemkin, and would come over as soon as the sailors landed.³¹

That evening the committee met to chart a course for future action. It decided to invite the remaining officers to join the mutiny. At 9:00 P.M., Matiushenko went downstairs to the wardroom with the proposal. All the officers hesitated at the suggestion -- purely for form, Kovalenko thought. He admits "The possibility of such a proposal had also never entered my mind -- at least in a clear and definite form. . . ." ³² Still he hesitated until reassured by Matiushenko that, while the offer was extended to all the officers, not all would be acceptable to the crew. Kovalenko, he said, would be entirely acceptable and was in no danger of being turned on later.³³ Kovalenko informed the others

³¹ Feldman, p. 56.

³² Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 1, 1907, p. 109.

³³ Ibid., p. 110.

of his decision to remain and was followed by Junior Surgeon Golenko. Golenko felt he had no right to desert the sick and wounded aboard. Engineer Mechanic Kaliuzhnyi also decided to stay.

These three were brought before the committee in the admiral's cabin and accepted despite Feldman's misgivings. He presents an interesting evaluation of the three. He felt that Kovalenko was really a "gentle liberal" rather than a man of strength and stability. "He was ready to give his own life for the people, but to urge others to do so ... that he could not do." Feldman disliked Golenko, "a dapper little man -- a typical pampered nobleman, self-complacent and a flatterer."³⁴ Kaliuzhnyi was simply a frightened lad who thought Odessa was in the hands of the people who would take vengeance on him if he left the Potemkin.³⁵ The next day Kaliuzhnyi asked to be set ashore, but as it was feared that his defection (the officer chosen to command, Alekseev, wanted to go too) would undermine the crew's morale, he was kept aboard.

The committee accepted these three recruits feeling that their co-operation would be useful and that they could be watched. The remaining officers were not to go ashore until the next day since the

³⁴ Feldman, p. 68.

³⁵ Ibid.

crew rather surprisingly feared that violence would be done them in Odessa. At this moment, a sailor rushed into the cabin with the news that the port was in flames.

The men rushed up on deck to find the port obscured in smoke. The Potemkin directed her searchlights towards the port but was unable to distinguish what was happening. A boatload of workers reached the ship with pleas for help as they were being fired on by Cossacks. Unable to make out details in the port, Kirill and Matiushenko set off in the cutter for reconnaissance.³⁶

The guns were manned,³⁷ but remained silent since the smoke made it impossible to distinguish targets in Odessa.

"Fire on the town?" asked one man. "Fire where?"³⁸ The sailors were afraid of killing workers, a problem which was to plague them during the whole of their Black Sea adventure. There was nothing for them to do but watch and listen to the sounds of gunfire throughout the night.

The next morning at 5:00 A.M., Feldman was wakened by Doctor Golenko who insisted that Vakulenchuk had to be buried immediately to avoid further clashes between the people and the authorities.³⁹

³⁶ Kirill, Drama, p. 81.

³⁷ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 85.

³⁸ Feldman, p. 70

³⁹ Ibid., p. 74.

Furthermore, the body would have begun to decompose badly, the heat of the fire having contributed its effects to that of the warm weather.⁴⁰

The committee decided to send a deputation to the military commander requesting permission for the funeral. Feldman, Father Parmen and two sailors were sent, Feldman changing into a sailor's uniform for safety. They were put ashore near the body which they found unharmed, but indeed showing the effects of the warm weather. Father Parmen conducted a hasty service over the body, then the deputation proceeded up the steps to Nikolaevskaia Street where they were quickly surrounded by a detachment of Cossacks. Father Parmen was taken aside by an officer who conducted him to the military commander, General Kakhanov.

Feldman fully expected they would be shot and realized how senseless the mission was; they could have buried Vakulenchuk at sea "with all ceremony and reverence."⁴¹ They were not shot. The officer who had conducted Father Parmen to the commanding officer returned to reassure the sailors that they were merely under guard. The Cossacks told them of the concentration of troops in Odessa which made Feldman realize that the opportunity for decisive

⁴⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 85.

⁴¹Feldman, p. 79.

action was fast disappearing.⁴² Father Parmen returned accompanied by a colonel who informed the deputation that they had permission to bury Vakulenchuk at 2:00 A.M. the next morning. The sailors, after protesting the time set for the funeral, made their way back to the ship. Feldman had the presence of mind to order a coffin from an undertaker passing by with a funeral.⁴³

Aboard the Potemkin the committee had been in session once more, still discussing what revolutionary action the ship should take. It was suggested that the crew was not sufficiently united to take any action. With this in mind, the officers were finally set ashore since it was feared they were a disruptive force.⁴⁴ The question also arose in relation to the 'conductors',⁴⁵ but the majority was in favor of keeping them aboard because their naval knowledge and technical skills were necessary for running the ship. Discussion of more important issues was deferred to a general meeting of the crew which was set for after lunch.

A boatload of local Social Democrats arrived with the maps of Odessa Kirill had requested, and the same information that Feldman

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁴ Kirill, Drama, p. 85.

⁴⁵ The conductors had been placed under arrest at Tendrovskii, but released shortly thereafter. They were technical and building specialists, who served as long term non-commissioned officers. Kirill, Drama, p. 188.

had been given concerning the arrival of troops and artillery in Odessa.

Feldman returned with the news that they had been unable to obtain permission to bury Vakulenchuk except at night. There was some discussion of a sea burial, but at 2:00 P.M. a launch arrived from the military commander giving permission for the funeral to be held that afternoon. The safety of twelve unarmed sailors to escort the coffin was guaranteed.⁴⁶

The permission had been granted as part of the plan not to antagonize the Potemkin,⁴⁷ probably because the authorities had received word that the squadron would not arrive that afternoon as they had expected. The officers from the Potemkin had arrived ashore after the departure of the deputation and affirmed that the Potemkin had indeed been on the verge of opening fire on the city the night before.⁴⁸

At 4:00 P.M. the twelve unarmed sailors escorted Vakulenchuk's coffin up the Richelieu steps and along Preobrazhenskaia Street to the Uspenskii Cathedral. Despite the bloody events of the night before a crowd of five to six hundred workers followed after the coffin. The street was lined with soldiers who saluted, took off their caps and crossed themselves.⁴⁹ At the Uspenskii Cathedral there was a brief

⁴⁶ Kirill, Drama, p. 85.

⁴⁷ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 85.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴⁹ Kirill, Drama, p. 91.

incident when a company of soldiers fired into the mourners without warning. The crowd fled but almost immediately reassembled. The shots had been blanks, fired because the authorities feared that the crowd would become excited and disorders would begin again.⁵⁰

After a hasty litany said by Father Parmen, the funeral procession was allowed to proceed to the cemetery where Vakulenchuk was interred with no further incident. Several fiery speeches were made over the grave, then the crowd broke up peacefully. The guard of honor had already departed because a Cossack colonel had hurried them into a cab and sent them back to the port.⁵¹ Near the port they were stopped by a company of soldiers and ordered to proceed on foot. Suddenly, without any warning, they were fired upon. This time live bullets were used. Although Nikishkin, a member of the honor guard, stated that no one was shot, the official reports showed that two sailors were killed and three defected from the honor guard.⁵² While the sailors stated that they heard the Potemkin's guns roar out only after they reached the harbor area, the official explanation for the shooting was that the sailors were ordered to stop, because the first three shots from the Potemkin were considered a warning that she was about to open

⁵⁰ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 85.

⁵¹ Statement of sailor Nikishkin to the committee, quoted in Kirill, Drama, pp. 92-93.

⁵² Report of Ignat'ev, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 85.

fire.⁵³ When they did not stop, a volley was fired at them.

It had taken a long time to reach the decision to bombard Odessa. In the admiral's cabin the committee had earlier agreed that action had to be taken against the authorities who had so cruelly dealt with the workers the night before. Once more the Social Democrats suggested a landing but this was still not considered feasible by the committee. The soldiers who had brought the permission to bury Vakulenchuk, had also brought news that a military council was to be held that afternoon in the city theatre. This was the target decided upon at a long and stormy general meeting held after lunch. Here, for the first time, the much feared internal divisions in the crew were manifest. Part of the crew objected strenuously to Feldman's speech proposing bombardment and even wanted him sent ashore. But a rousing speech by Matiushenko on their duty to their fellow workers soon had the crew united and enthusiastic once more, at least on the surface.⁵⁴

At 5:00 P.M. the Potemkin steamed a half-mile further out to sea and anchored broadside to Odessa harbor. Five shots were fired from her six inch guns, the first three were blanks and the second two live ammunition. The two shells flew over the theatre, one destroying the roof and part of a wall of a house on Nizhinskaia Street,

⁵³ Report of Bezradetskii, Ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁴ Feldman, p. 90.

while the other destroyed a house in the suburb of Butaevok. No one was killed.⁵⁵

The theatre was in plain view of the Potemkin and it seemed impossible that they could have missed. Both Feldman and Kirill were convinced that the misses were the result of treason on the part of Signalman Vedermeier.⁵⁶ Kovalenko, however, says that the misses were no surprise to him since "the Potemkin had not once fired a practise shot, and in order to hit the target with brand new guns, the gunner ought to have found the range beforehand."⁵⁷ Novikov, who criticized Feldman as a landsman not understanding naval affairs, added that the signalman was not responsible for directing the firing and could not figure the angle of elevation which was necessary to fire up onto the heights of Odessa.⁵⁸

Fear of hitting innocent people forced the Potemkin to cease firing. Instead a deputation was sent once more to the military commander, General Kakhanov. Feldman, machinist Savotchenko, and Zvenigorodskii were to say that the firing was meant as an example and proof of the Potemkin's intentions. They were to invite the military commander or his representatives aboard where they would be presented with the following demands:

⁵⁵ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 84.

⁵⁶ Feldman, p. 94. Kirill, Drama, p. 98.

⁵⁷ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 2, 1907, p. 131.

⁵⁸ Novikov, Morskii sbornik, No. 1, 1926, p. 115.

1. Immediate release of all political prisoners;
2. The immediate cessation of firing on the peaceful inhabitants of the town;
3. As a guarantee of this, the withdrawal of all troops from the town and the surrender of the arsenals to the people;
4. Unhindered purchase of all supplies.⁵⁹

The deputation was given two signal rockets and was promised that the Potemkin would open fire if they did not return safely.⁶⁰ On reaching shore, they found the remaining members of the honor guard with some workers who informed them that the port was cordoned off by soldiers as it was suspected that the sailors were about to land.⁶¹ Fearing that they would be fired upon, Feldman asked the priest of the harbor church to approach the authorities for them. The priest returned with a guarantee for the sailors' safety and word that they would be allowed to see the military commander.

Proceeding up the steps to the top landing, the deputation encountered a "short general seated in an armchair."⁶² It was to him that they made their demand that representatives of the authorities

⁵⁹ Kirill, Drama, p. 100.

⁶⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 100.

⁶¹ Feldman, p. 98.

⁶² Ibid., p. 99. The general's identity is in question. Kirill refers to him as General Protopopov (Drama, p. 100), Feldman thought he was either Protopov or perhaps General Karangozov.

come aboard the Potemkin for negotiations. The general departed, returning fifteen minutes later with the reply that:

The commander-in-chief does not desire to enter into any negotiations with mutineers; and if you like to fire more shells at the homes of peaceful citizens then God and the Tsar will be your judges. Now you can go -- no one will touch you.⁶³

Back aboard the Potemkin the indignation at both the answer to the deputation and the firing on the funeral guard quickly turned to excitement as news spread that the squadron was near. Earlier in the day there had been a second cry of "Squadron!", but the ship sighted had proven to be merely a small training vessel, the Prut, on her way to Nikolaev. The Prut had passed by unaware of the Potemkin or that she had mutinied. This time, however, the sailors knew from an intercepted telegraph message that the squadron was coming.⁶⁴ The Squadron was not expected to arrive until next morning; nevertheless, the torpedo crew slept at their stations while the 267 and the cutter patrolled all night against surprise attack.⁶⁵

At 8:30 on the morning of June 17 the squadron appeared over the horizon. The acting commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral Kriger, had been informed of the mutiny and of the arrival of

⁶³ Feldman, p. 102.

⁶⁴ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 2, 1907, p. 133.

⁶⁵ Kirill, Drama, p. 104.

the Potemkin in Odessa on June 15. That afternoon he ordered Rear Admiral Vishnevskii to go after the Potemkin. Three battleships were sent, the Tri Sviatitelia, the Dvenadtsat Apostolov, and the Georgii Pobedonosets; a mine cruiser, the Kazarmii; and four torpedo boats. Late that night Vishnevskii set sail.⁶⁶

The next day, June 16, Kriger received a telegram from Admiral Avelan, Director of the Naval Ministry, ordering him to:

Proceed immediately with the whole squadron and torpedo boats to Odessa. Order the crew of the Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii to submit, if you receive a refusal immediately sink the battleship ... in order not to give the Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii an opportunity to open fire on the city and the ships⁶⁷

At 11:00 A.M. the battleships Rostislav and Sinop were ordered to prepare to sail, but it was not until 7:00 P.M. that the remainder of the Black Sea Fleet left for Tendrovskii. When the admirals joined forces at eleven o'clock on the morning of June 17, Vishnevskii had already had a brief encounter with the Potemkin.

The crew of the Potemkin had risen at five as usual on the morning of June 17 and had put the ship into fighting order in expectation of the arrival of the squadron. At the suggestion of Kirill, the Smelyi, a

⁶⁶ Originally, the Ekaterina II was ordered to sail with Vishnevskii but the order was shortly rescinded. The evening before, on June 14, the crew of the Katia had refused to sing "God Save the Tsar" at evening prayers. It was likely therefore that the crew was considered too unreliable. "Pis'mo matrosa," Iskra, No. 105, July 15, 1905, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Naval Ministry Telegram No. 2996, quoted in Platonov, p. 160.

rescue steamer belonging to the Russian Society of Steam Navigation and Trade, was commandeered and sent scouting for the squadron.⁶⁸ The Vekha was converted into a hospital ship; a Red Cross flag was raised over her, and a red cross painted on her smokestack. Then she was anchored at a distance from the Potemkin.⁶⁹ The committee appointed a commission of specialists to inspect the battle-readiness of the ship.⁷⁰ All was set except the plan to be followed on meeting the squadron. The civilians were in favor of ordering the squadron to stand at anchor immediately it came within range of the Potemkin's guns. If the squadron did not obey, the Potemkin would open fire.⁷¹ The crew protested that their fellow sailors would not willingly fire on them; bombarding the squadron, however, would force the other crews to defend themselves.⁷² No decision was reached by 8:30 A.M. when the battleships were sighted.

The Potemkin, which had been waiting with steam up, sailed forth to meet them. The squadron slowed, then stopped. The Potemkin also stopped. A telegram arrived from Vishnevskii reading, "Men of the Black Sea! We are aggrieved at your actions. Madmen, repent

⁶⁸ Avdeev in Pokrovskii (ed.), p. 208.

⁶⁹ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 2, 1907, p. 134.

⁷⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 104.

⁷¹ Feldman, p. 104.

⁷² Kirill, Drama, p. 104.

and we will have pity on you!" The Potemkin answered, "As you are our immediate superior, we request you to come aboard; we guarantee your complete safety."⁷³ There was no reply. The Potemkin began to steam slowly forward, but the squadron turned and disappeared from sight. The Potemkin returned to her former position in the Odessa Roads with the mood of her crew considerably elevated. "Yes," noted Kovalenko, "obviously our battleship is indeed formidable if it frightens the whole squadron."⁷⁴

It was the whole squadron which reappeared over the horizon at 12:30 P.M. The Ekaterina II was still missing but there were now five battleships, the mine cruiser and six torpedo boats. The squadron bore down in full array and the Potemkin steamed forth to meet it. Once more messages flew back and forth. From the fleet, "Black Sea Men! Send your deputies to the flagship for negotiations." The Potemkin replied, "We will not send our deputies, if you wish to negotiate, come to the Potemkin."⁷⁵

During this exchange, the squadron and the Potemkin were approaching each other at full speed. There was not a soul to be seen aboard the Potemkin, just her four big guns sighted in and following

⁷³ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 304.

⁷⁴ Kovalenko, Byloe, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 85.

⁷⁵ Kirill, Drama, p. 109.

their targets. In deadly silence the two forces bore down on each other until the Potemkin was "in traverse" between the flagship Rostislav and the Tri Sviatitelia. Then the silence was broken by a shout of "Long Live Freedom! Hurrah" from someone aboard the Potemkin. Immediately there was an answering roar "Hurrah" from the crews of three battleships, the Sinop, the Dvenadtsat Apostolov and the Georgii Pobedonosets.⁷⁶ On the Potemkin, Kovalenko barely managed to restrain the gun crews from rushing out on deck when they heard the shouting.⁷⁷ Aboard the cheering battleships the officers had no such success. By now the ships had changed positions; the Potemkin was in the open sea, the squadron in Odessa harbor. Not wishing to be cut off from her base, the Potemkin turned about,⁷⁸ while the squadron did the same in the belief that the Potemkin would make good her escape.⁷⁹ Vice Admiral Kriger reported that while the squadron was turning, he noticed that the crew of the Georgii Pobedonosets had left their positions and were on deck. By semaphore Kriger demanded the reason for this behavior and in answer he was told that the crew had asked for the sloop to put its officers ashore.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ "Pis'mo matrosa, " Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 2, 1907, p. 139.

⁷⁸ K. [Kirill?], "Krasnyi flot, " Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Petition of Vice Admiral Kriger to the Tsar, quoted in Platonov, p. 160.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The Georgii was ordered to Sevastopol immediately, but it was already too late. On the second pass, the Potemkin sailed between the Sinop and the Dvenadtsat Apostolov on which discipline had also disappeared. On all but the Rostislav and the Tri Sviatitelia, the crews were on deck, waving their caps and shouting.

The squadron quickly disappeared over the horizon, but as it was retreating, the men of the Potemkin noticed that one of the battleships first dropped behind and then turned and sailed towards the Potemkin. It was the Georgii Pobedonosets. "Not knowing her intentions we did not allow her near us, but immediately gave the order to stand at anchor."⁸¹

The Georgii semaphored, "The crew requests that friends come aboard from the Potemkin." Instead, the Potemkin signalled back, "Arrest your officers and send a deputation to us." But the Georgii answered, "Things are going badly, we are not all agreed. We cannot manage. Send help quickly."⁸² And indeed, the Georgii's officers were still visible on the bridge.

The 267 was dispatched to the Georgii with Matiushenko, Kulik, Dymchenko, and some other sailors. Kirill quickly followed in the

⁸¹"K." [Kirill?], "Krasnyi flot", Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

⁸² Kirill, Drama, p. 113.

cutter. The usual fiery speeches were made, although by this time the main speech makers were losing their voices.

Even at this stage, it was obvious that the crew of the Georgii was neither so revolutionary nor so resolute as that of the Potemkin. Kirill himself was forced to take command of the guard which arrested the officers, and it was necessary for the agitators from the Potemkin to assist in the creation of a committee to direct the activity of the Georgii.⁸³ It seems that a very small number of sailors had managed to stop the engines, thus wresting control of the ship from the officers. The remainder of the crew was divided between those wishing to join the Potemkin and those who did not.

The officers were taken ashore and the Georgii joined the Potemkin in Odessa harbor. At first the authorities thought that the Potemkin had surrendered to the Georgii,⁸⁴ but it was not long before they discovered their mistake. The senior harbor pilot Romanenko arrived aboard the Georgii only to be told that the leaders were aboard the Potemkin. There he was given a demand for provisions, but was forced to tell the committee that all supplies, except those for the sick, were to be refused the mutineers by order of General Kakhanov.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 114-118.

⁸⁴ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 86.

⁸⁵ Report of Ignat'ev, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 95.

At eleven o'clock that night, the torpedo boat 272 arrived from Vice Admiral Kriger with a request to negotiate. The committee, ever fearful of torpedos, decided to send the cutter and the 267 to meet it. But for unknown reasons, the torpedo boat disappeared into the darkness. The 272 had been sent simply to negotiate, not to torpedo the two battleships although Kriger had considered the possibility. The admiral, however, was no longer certain of the reliability of his crews and thought they might refuse to fire. Moreover, the Potemkin was keeping sharp watch for a surprise attack.⁸⁶ The battleship's search lights were in use all night, both ships' cutters and the 267 were kept on patrol.

The "revolutionary squadron" had been strengthened considerably. There were two battleships, one torpedo boat and one hospital ship anchored in Odessa harbor. The next day they would begin to fight the authorities in Odessa, unite with the workers in the revolution. But, success had not been complete; the "revolutionary squadron" did not contain the entire Black Sea Fleet as expected.

⁸⁶ Report of War Admiralty Procurator Aleksandrovych, quoted in Platonov, pp. 88-89.

CHAPTER V

"TO ROMANIA!"

Very shortly after the Georgii Pobedonosets joined the "revolutionary squadron," it became obvious to the Potemkin that the other battleship was under the influence of a determined but small group of men. The majority of the sailors, however, were "under-conscious" and divided in their loyalty. A member of the committee aboard the Georgii had already suggested that one-half of each crew should be transferred to the other battleship in order to strengthen the resolve of the Georgii. This suggestion was not adopted since it was feared the fighting efficiency of both ships would be impaired by men who were unfamiliar with their battle stations.¹

Consequently, early in the morning of June 18, the committee aboard the Potemkin sent a deputation to the Georgii in an effort to create solidarity. Even before Kirill, Golenko, Kovalenko, Zvenigorodskii and Kulik arrived, quarrels had broken out between the opposing factions: those who wanted to return to Sevastopol to surrender, and those who wanted to remain with the Potemkin.² There followed a stormy session

¹ Feldman, p. 123.

² Kirill, Drama, p. 124.

during which all the speakers were both loudly supported and loudly opposed. Finally there was a cry for the officers to speak. While Kovalenko and Golenko were no longer wearing their insignia, their officers uniforms distinguished them from the sailors. Kovalenko was forced to ask any member of the crew who recognized him to step forward when shouts arose that he was a civilian dressed in officer's clothing. Fortunately, there were several men aboard the Georgii who were able to identify him.³

The officers' speeches seem to have had the desired effect. The crew of the Georgii at least agreed that the battleships should act in concert. A deputation was to go aboard the Potemkin where a common plan of action would be agreed upon.⁴ As the Potemkin delegation was about to pull away, however, the elected commander of the Georgii, Boatswain Kuzmin, declared:

Our committee will not come to you,
you have accomplished nothing here.
We will still weigh anchor at 12:00.⁵

Back aboard the Potemkin, it was unanimously agreed that the ship would not return to Sevastopol. Matiushenko, who had already been ashore that morning, returned with the welcome news that the

³ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1967, p. 53.

⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵ Kirill, Drama, p. 126.

Potemkin's previous shelling of Odessa had killed no one. He proposed that they try a further shelling, this time aiming at the military headquarters on Nikolaevskaia Street.⁶ Since it was impossible to act until the solidarity of the Georgii was guaranteed, Feldman was to go into Odessa in search of more agitators. He did not leave the ship, however, because it had been decided to arrest the conductors aboard the Georgii as they were suspected of agitating for surrender. The task of explaining the necessity for the arrests to the politically immature members of the Georgii's crew was a delicate one, so he elected to be a member of the deputation. Feldman was delayed, so the rest of the deputation preceeded him. Thus Doctor Golenko, who had made one speech against surrender already that morning, set off without him in the company of a small group of sailors.

A solution to the Potemkin's persistant fuel problems was found in Odessa harbor in the form of a collier, the Peter Riger, which belonged to the Russian Society. Kirill was dispatched by cutter in an attempt to buy the coal. When this failed, the collier was taken by armed force. Soon 100,000 puds were being loaded aboard the Potemkin.

⁶ Ibid., p. 123.

While the loading of coal was in progress, a part of the committee was once more meeting in the admiral's cabin. The senior harbor pilot Romanenko had come aboard with the provisions for the sick. The committee wrote out a list of demands which they wished him to deliver to the military authorities, along with a list of provisions which were to be delivered within twenty-four hours under threat of bombardment.⁷

They were still talking in the admiral's cabin when a shout was heard from the deck -- the Georgii Pobedonesets had weighed anchor and was steaming out of Odessa harbor! For a moment all was confusion aboard the Potemkin as some sailors demanded that the Potemkin chase the Georgii, while others manned the guns. The decks were cleared, the coal barge hastily towed away, and the big guns swung slowly towards the Georgii.

The signal, "Return to your previous position," was raised but produced no effect. The order came from the bridge to break out the battle flag and the red flag was raised over the Potemkin.⁸ Still the Georgii continued out of the harbor until a warning shot roared out of the Potemkin's big twelve inch gun. Then the Georgii turned abruptly. The sailors aboard the

⁷ Ibid., p. 129.

⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

Potemkin expected that she was returning to her previous anchorage as ordered. To their great surprise, the Georgii sped past them into the harbor and ran up against the mole.

It was then that the cry "To Romania!" broke out. It is uncertain where the suggestion first came from. Kovalenko noted that even before he joined the mutiny the arrested officers expected the Potemkin to sail to a foreign port -- perhaps in Romania.⁹ Kirill blamed Kovalenko and Alekseev for starting the rumor that the Potemkin should go to Romania to avoid a clash with the squadron.¹⁰ Kovalenko denied this, but admitted that the rumor was circulating amongst the crew.¹¹

Now it came into the open and rapidly took hold of the sailors. Feldman and Kirill protested to Matiushenko who simply replied that if they were afraid to go, they could be put ashore.¹² No discussion seems to have taken place, no decision reached, but by general consensus the Potemkin began to head for Romania.

Feldman remembered the deputation which was still aboard the Georgii and ordered the 267 to fetch them.¹³ No one thought of the Vekha which was simply abandoned. It was from the sailors who returned

⁹ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 95.

¹⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 88.

¹¹ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 127.

¹² Feldman, p. 140.

¹³ Ibid.

from the Georgii that the Potemkin learned how Doctor Golenko had betrayed them by telling the sailors aboard the Georgii that the Potemkin had decided to return to Sevastopol. He and Kuzmin had given the order to weigh anchor and then had driven the Georgii onto the mole after the shot from the Potemkin proved to the crew that they had been deceived. The crew had not been able to read the first signal and had been told it meant that the Potemkin would follow, but all recognized the red battle flag.¹⁴

A number of reasons have been given for the Potemkin's flight from Odessa. It is true that the main batteries of the Georgii could have been used by the authorities as heavy artillery against the mutineers.¹⁵ There also was the danger of the Potemkin being caught between two forces if the squadron returned and she were still in the port.¹⁶ These arguments, however, benefit from hindsight and were only used after the event to justify it. Kirill was perhaps nearer the truth when he called their flight a reaction of panic.¹⁷

The Potemkin had gone for several hours when the training ship Prut steamed into Odessa harbor to join her. The crew had mutinied the day before when they were ordered to join the squadron against the Potemkin. On finding her missing, the majority of the crew voted

¹⁴ Kirill, Drama, p. 132.

¹⁵ Feldman, p. 138.

¹⁶ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 308.

¹⁷ Kirill, Drama, p. 132.

to return to Sevastopol and surrender.

Aboard the Georgii, on the mole in Odessa harbor, there was still disagreement among the crew.¹⁸ After the Potemkin sailed away however, there was very little the revolutionary segment could do. Boatswain Kuzmin reported to the authorities that the crew was still divided and requested that an armed guard be put aboard to protect the ship's coffer and to guard the arms.¹⁹ The deputation to the military commander asked to have their officers returned to them and expressed their willingness to serve the Tsar. Admiral Chukhnin, now back in Sevastopol, agreed on condition that the crew gave up all participants in the mutiny. If they refused, they would all be severely punished.²⁰ The surrender was accepted by Khakanov at 11:00 P.M. and two companies of soldiers were placed aboard. It was not until the morning of June 20 that Vice Admiral Kriger arrived with the Rostislav and the Sinop to escort the Georgii back to Sevastopol.²¹ The Georgii's officers had been brought from Nikolaev, and 67 mutineers were surrendered by the crew.²² The torpedo boats 272 and 273 were left in Odessa as protection against the possible return

¹⁸ Platonov, p. 97.

¹⁹ Report of Ignat'ev, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 98.

²⁰ Platonov, p. 99.

²¹ Document 182, Representation of the procurator of the Odessa district court to the procurator of the Odessa courthouse, June 21, 1905, Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, pp. 243-245.

²² Platonov, p. 19.

of the Potemkin.²³

* * *

Aboard the Potemkin steaming southward to Romania, the excitement had died down. Most of the men slept; for the first time since June 14 they were out of immediate danger. Later that night Matiushenko agreed that it would be a shame to surrender their mighty guns and calmed the anxious Kirill who feared that the men would carry through with their decision to surrender in Romania. Kirill found a book on international law in the officers' library which stated "categorically" that all countries were bound to extradite military personnel. The book had been published long before and Kirill doubted the provisions still held, but he was satisfied it would be sufficient to prevent a light-hearted surrender to the Romanians.²⁴

The crew slept late aboard the Potemkin on the morning of June 19, and indeed awoke in a more cheerful frame of mind as Matiushenko had forseen.

At one of the perennial committee meetings, which a large number

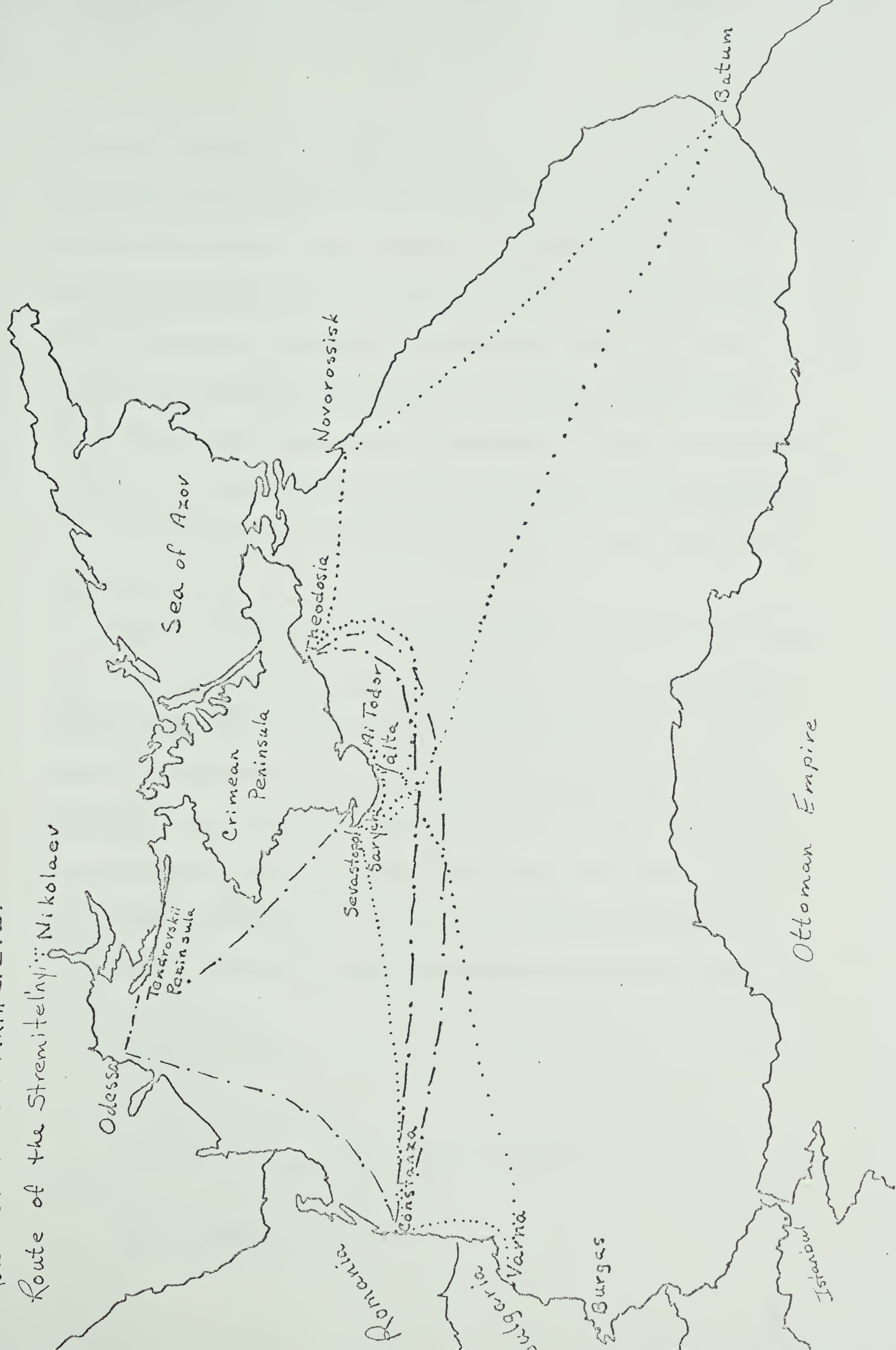
²³ Report of Bezradetskii, Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 2-3, 1935, p. 89.

²⁴ Kirill, Drama, p. 138.

Map of the Black Sea.

Route of the Potemkin - - - - -

Route of the Stremitelnyi: Nikolaev



of sailors attended, discussion turned first to the reasons for the Potemkin's flight and then to her future course of action.²⁵ Feldman suggested one cause of flight was the lack of effective direction of the Potemkin's activities. A committee of 25 men was too unwieldy for the continuous command of the battleship.²⁶ Since there was general agreement on this point, three men were chosen to run the ship: Reznichenko, Kostenko and Matiushenko.²⁷ Thus the ineffectual Alekseev was removed from even nominal command of the Potemkin. The "commission," as the three were called, was fully answerable to the committee.

Kirill next suggested that another reason for their panicked flight was the actions of Alekseev and the conductors. The evening before, he and Feldman had decided that the conductors had been carrying on secret agitation in favor of deserting the revolution and fleeing to Romania, and that this was why the cry of "To Romania!" had arisen immediately after the Georgii had betrayed them.²⁸ Feldman and Dmychenko had gone so far as to check that the most reliable men were placed on guard over the rifles for fear the conductors would

²⁵ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁶ Feldman, p. 144.

²⁷ Kirill, Drama, p. 144. Three candidate members were also chosen.

²⁸ Feldman, p. 144.

attempt a counter-mutiny.²⁹ There was general agreement that the conductors were a menace, but decision on the action to be taken against them could not be reached. The members who wanted them put ashore were countered by those who feared the conductors knew so much about the Potemkin's actions that they could be of assistance to the authorities.³⁰

The main interest of the meeting was focused on the immediate problem of what the Potemkin was going to do once she reached Romania. The committee was agreed that they should buy provisions, coal and water, as well as trying to discover news of the political situation in Russia before sailing back to continue the fight. There were protests from some of the assembled crew members, but these were quelled when Kirill produced his book on international law and convinced them that rather than being allowed to go ashore peacefully in Romania, they would be extradited to Russia.³¹

Unanimity once more restored, the committee decided that all dealings with the Romanians should be tactful and diplomatic. In order to make clear that the Potemkin was not a pirate ship, two declarations were prepared. Kirill wrote a proclamation "To All the Civilized World," which stated the purpose of the Potemkin's struggle,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kirill, Drama, p. 143.

³¹ Feldman, p. 155.

while Feldman wrote "To All European States!", which guaranteed that no foreign shipping would be molested in the Black Sea (please see the Appendix).³² The Potemkin feared that the Russian government would turn world opinion against them. Feldman even feared foreign intervention.³³

About 4:00 P.M. the coast of Romania came into view and at 5:00 the Potemkin dropped anchor in the outer harbor of Constanza. Within half an hour a launch was seen approaching with two officers aboard. A guard of honor formed on the Potemkin and a thirty-one gun salute was fired. The two Romanian officers, the harbor master and a lieutenant from the cruiser Elisaveta, came aboard and were escorted to the wardroom by Kovalenko.

A communication problem arose. Kirill and Kovalenko spoke with the lieutenant in a mixture of French and German, while Matiushenko conversed with the harbor master, Lieutenant Captain Negru, through a Moldavian sailor from the Potemkin's crew.³⁴ With great difficulty the Romanians explained that they were unauthorized to allow the Potemkin to purchase supplies, but promised to telegraph Bucharest for permission immediately. They also

³² Kirill, Drama, p. 144.

³³ Feldman, p. 159.

³⁴ Kirill, Drama, p. 146.

promised to see that the Potemkin's two declarations were delivered to the press and to the various consuls.

As soon as the Romanians departed, another boat was seen approaching. It contained Captain Second Rank Nikolai Banov from the Russian stantsioner³⁵ Psezuape, coming to pay his respects to his senior officer. He was greatly flustered when he was met by Kovalenko and told that the ship had mutinied. When Kovalenko asked him if he had not read of the mutiny, Banov answered that he was illiterate, hastening to add that he meant in Romanian. The crew roared with laughter and he was allowed to retreat in confusion.³⁶

Fearing a torpedo attack even in Romania, Matiushenko went aboard the Elisaveta and obtained permission for the Potemkin to use her searchlights throughout the night on condition that they would not be directed into either the port or the city. Matiushenko reported that while he was aboard the Eliseveta, the Romanian officers offered to buy the Potemkin. He supposedly replied that the ship was not his to sell, since it belonged to the Russian people. He offered instead

³⁵ A stantsioner is a military vessel intended for permanent assignment in foreign water, in this case to protect Russian fishing vessels in Romanian water. Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 60.

³⁶ Ibid. The report of the Constanza harbor master Negru puts this story in question. He says that he knew of the mutiny before he went aboard, having been told of it by Banov. Why Banov would then have gone to the Potemkin, if he actually did, is not clear. Report of harbor master Negru in P.M. Bogachev, ed., Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v chernomorskom flote v 1905-1907 goda (Moscow, 1956), p. 19.

to buy the Elisaveta from the Potemkin's funds.³⁷

The next morning, on June 20, Matiushenko went ashore to see if permission had been granted for the Potemkin to purchase supplies. Provisions were a pressing necessity by this time; since June 16 there had been no meat, just cabbage and potatoes in "empty" soup. For two days rusks had replaced bread.³⁸ There also was a shortage of both coal and fresh water since the Potemkin's boilers had been kept fired at all times. Already the ship was forced to use semi-salty water in the boilers which was causing scale in the pipes.³⁹

But the crew was to be disappointed. The Romanian government had refused permission for the Potemkin to purchase provisions on the grounds that to do so was contrary to international laws.⁴⁰ The telegram to Negru from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, General I. Lagovari, read:

Try to convince the Russian sailors that our government will consider them foreign deserters, and accordingly, it will grant them freedom as soon as they leave their ship and land without their guns, and also on condition that they surrender the ship unharmed. Then as soon as they accept these conditions, they will be given the freedom of choice between proceeding to Bulgaria or of joining a private passenger ship.

³⁷ Matiushenko was alone aboard the Elisaveta so there is no one able to corroborate his story. Considering the trouble the sailors had communicating with the Romanians, it is possible that Matiushenko misunderstood something that was said to him. It is also possible that he invented the story. Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 310.

³⁸ Kirill, Drama, p. 148.

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³⁹ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 62.

Ibid.

After this I order you to occupy the vessel with a military guard and to help the sailors to purchase provisions for themselves.⁴¹

The suggestion to surrender the Potemkin with the guarantee that the sailors would not be extradited apparently was not even considered. Their immediate reaction was to return to Russia where the Potemkin would not feel constrained from taking supplies by force. But to where in Russia? At first everyone thought of Odessa, but it seemed likely the authorities would expect this and would have prepared for it.⁴² Kirill suggested the Caucasus,⁴³ while Feldman felt that they should first stop at Theodosia. There they would surely find coal, and it was close enough to Sevastopol for them to get news of the fleet.⁴⁴

Everyone was agreed, and by 1:00 P.M. the Potemkin was once more on the open sea.

* * *

The squadron in the meantime had returned to Sevastopol following its unsuccessful encounter with the Potemkin. After losing the Georgii,

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

⁴¹ Quoted in Kirill, Drama, p. 149.

⁴² Feldman, p. 167.

⁴³ Feldman, p. 167.

⁴⁴ Feldman, p. 168.

Kruger halted the squadron and requested his officers to report on the reliability of their crews. As not one crew was considered reliable, Kruger felt he had no choice but to abandon the attempt to capture the Potemkin.⁴⁵ This did not improve morale in the Fleet. On his return to Sevastopol, Admiral Chukhnin was forced to report to the Naval Ministry that the officers had lost all power and authority, and that it would be impossible to rely on the crews until their leaders were arrested. He was obliged to ask for troops to carry out these arrests.⁴⁶

Only one vessel was sent after the Potemkin. On June 20, the same day the Potemkin left Constanza, the torpedo cruiser Stremitel'nyi sailed from Sevastopol with orders to sink the battleship. She was manned by a special crew of twenty-two officers and twenty enlisted men, all volunteers.⁴⁷ For the next five days the Stremitel'nyi pursued the Potemkin back and forth across the Black Sea, chasing rumors which took her to Constanza, Varna, Ai Todor, Sarych, Yalta, Theodosia, Novorossisk, Batum, until she finally limped back into Sevastopol early in the morning of June 25, her boilers ruined. The chase was not abandoned. The torpedo cruiser Zavetnyi set off

⁴⁵ Report of Vice Admiral Kruger, Platonov, p. 165.

⁴⁶ Telegram from Admiral Chukhnin to the Naval Ministry, quoted in Platonov, p. 124.

⁴⁷ Platonov, p. 117.

immediately with the same crew for Constanza, but she arrived too late.

The government had not been idle. Diplomatic dispatches were sent to all countries with Black Sea ports -- Bulgaria, Romania and the Ottoman Empire -- requesting them not to permit the Potemkin to take on supplies. The governments were warned that the sailors were murderers, looters and arsonists, not simply mutineers. The Russian government became especially adamant on this point when it learned that the Romanians had offered to treat the sailors as common deserters.⁴⁹

The Bulgarians very politely reassured the Russians that they would do as requested, that was to deny provisions to the Potemkin and place her crew under arrest if she appeared.⁵⁰ The Sultan took all possible precautions in the Bosphorus, the Straits were mined and heavy artillery moved in, but he was uneasy about his undefended coast and hoped the Russian Navy would quickly recapture the Potemkin.⁵¹ He was also requested by the British to allow two

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 117-119.

⁴⁹ Telegrams 277 and 278, St. Petersburg to Sofia and Bucharest, June 20, 1905, "Flot v 1905", Krasnyi arkhiv, Nos. 4-5, 1925, p. 196.

⁵⁰ Telegram, Sophia to St. Petersburg, June 21, 1905, Ibid., p. 197.

⁵¹ Telegram, Constantinople to St. Petersburg, June 24, 1905, Ibid., p. 201.

cruisers into the Black Sea to protect British shipping. This request was denied but the Sultan agreed to reconsider the matter if the situation changed.⁵²

It was the Romanians who received the most demands and advice, until they felt it necessary to point out, politely, that it was hardly reasonable to expect that two Romanian ships, one a cruiser and the other a gunboat, should be able to accomplish more than the entire Russian Black Sea Fleet.⁵³ But by then the Potemkin had departed, headed in a southerly direction in order to disguise her true destination.

* * *

After spending one whole day at sea, the Potemkin anchored in Theodosia harbor on the morning of June 22, gaily bedecked with flags to convince the people of the city that the Potemkin was not a "pirate" ship. The crew decided during the voyage that they should show their true colors and a large red flag flew in place of the flag of St. Andrew. On one side was inscribed "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" and on the other "Long Live the People's Government."

⁵² Telegram, Constantinople to St. Petersburg, June 22, 1905, ibid.

⁵³ Telegram, Bucharest to Romanian Consul in St. Petersburg, June 25, 1905, ibid., p. 208.

A large crowd gathered in Theodosia port almost immediately. Going ashore with an armed guard, Kirill, Koshuba and Reznichenko approached a district police officer in the crowd and asked him to convey a request to the city authorities that a deputation be sent to the Potemkin for negotiations. They also requested that a doctor be sent.⁵⁴

Soon five men -- the mayor, the clerk of the town council, his assistant, a civil engineer, and a doctor -- appeared and were taken to the Potemkin. The committee explained that the ship had come to Theodosia simply for supplies. The deputation asked for a list and promised to deliver everything as soon as possible. In return they requested that the Potemkin neither bombard the city nor cause any misfortune to its inhabitants. The committee readily agreed.⁵⁵ In addition, the deputation was given a written description of events at Tendrovskii and a copy of the declaration "To All the Civilized World." The committee asked them to hold a meeting of the municipal council at which these would be made public.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Kirill, Drama, p. 159.

⁵⁵ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 311.

⁵⁶ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 64.

By noon some of the supplies had begun to arrive.⁵⁷ The town clerk, however, explained that the garrison commander, Major General Pleshkov, had refused to allow either water or coal to be delivered to the Potemkin. His orders, which came directly from the government, were to reject the Potemkin's demands and to prevent a landing.⁵⁹ The mayor of Theodosia, Durante, appealed to the Governor of Tavricheskii Province, only to discover that he was already en route to Theodosia and was expected to arrive at any time. Perhaps he would allow the Potemkin to take on coal.⁶⁰

By evening it was clear to the sailors that there was to be no coal that day. There seemed to be no coal in the port, but as Theodosia was a major railroad terminal, there had to be coal in the city.⁶¹ The committee composed an ultimatum which Kirill and Reznichenko took to the municipal council at 10:00 P.M. It read:

⁵⁷ The list of supplies requested: 30,000 pud of coal (not given), 40 tons of water (not given), 40 puds of meat (given), 8 oxen (4 given), 50 puds of oil for the machine (given), 10 puds of tow (given), 5 puds of soda (not given), 1 barrel of wine (given), 3 pud tobacco (given), 100 books of paper (not given), 1 box of matches (given), 100 pud bread (given), 200 pud of flour (given); Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 311.

⁵⁸ Report of Tavricheskii Province Gendarme Administration, Colonel Zagoskin to Corps of Gendarmes Odessa, in V.I. Nevskii, p. 267.

⁵⁹ Platonov, p. 112.

⁶⁰ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 65.

⁶¹ Feldman, p. 168. Feldman says this is one of the reasons he suggested Theodosia in the first place.

If . . . coal has not been supplied, at ten o'clock the battleship will open fire on the town. We beg to warn all peaceable inhabitants.⁶²

Early the next morning, the sailors watched the mass exodus of the people of Theodosia. During the night the mayor had had notices posted stating that the inhabitants of the town had until 10:00 A.M. to leave the city for a less dangerous place or face bombardment.⁶³ Theodosia was under martial law.⁶⁴

Matiushenko and Feldman went ashore where they met representatives of the municipality who asked that the Potemkin wait at least until 11:00 A.M. before beginning the bombardment. They had appealed to the governor and hoped he would grant their request to allow the Potemkin to take on coal.⁶⁵ It is highly likely the municipal authorities were merely playing for time. Returning to the Potemkin, Matiushenko decided to make a brief reconnaissance of the harbor where he discovered a collier loaded with 15,000 pud of anthracite. The officer in command of the vessel agreed to let the Potemkin have the coal on condition that they simply take it.⁶⁶ Apparently he hoped to avoid later difficulties with the authorities in

⁶² Feldman, pp. 185-186.

⁶³ K[Kirill?], "Krasnyi flot", Iskra, No. 105, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Colonel Zagoskin in Nevskii, p. 267.

⁶⁵ Feldman, p. 187.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 188.

this way.

The cutter with a number of armed men aboard was immediately sent to tow the collier to the Potemkin. The 267 was sent along on guard, although no incident was expected.⁶⁷ Most of the men from the cutter were aboard the collier weighing anchor when a squad of soldiers, appearing suddenly on the wharf, opened fire without warning. Two or three sailors fell into the water wounded, the rest jumped overboard or fell flat on the deck. The 267 deserted at the first volley and fled back to the protection of the Potemkin. Matiushenko, in the cutter with one dead and one wounded sailor, had no choice but to do the same after its steering mechanism had been destroyed. It was with the greatest difficulty that he regained the battleship.⁶⁸

Feldman jumped overboard, but after an unsuccessful attempt to save a sailor, was forced to turn back, exhausted. He and two other sailors who were also trying to swim to the Potemkin, were picked out of the water by the soldiers and placed under arrest.⁶⁹

Consternation reigned aboard the Potemkin. At the sound of shooting, the guns were manned but no shots were fired. At whom

⁶⁷ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 312.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 319.

⁶⁹ Feldman, p. 189.

should they shoot? Once again, as in Odessa, the horror of injuring innocent people prevented the sailors from carrying out their threats. And once again, as in Odessa, the cry of "To Romania!" broke out and was taken up by the crew.⁷⁰

The return voyage was in contrast to the trip to Theodosia. On the way out the crew had been determined and reasonably optimistic about their chances of success although their unity had shown serious signs of deteriorating. Returning to Constanza, they were defeated men who wanted only peace. The big red flag was quietly buried at sea.

At 11:00 P.M. on June 24 the Potemkin was once again in the Constanza harbor. The launch was sent into the port with Matiushenko and a few others. On being asked why they had returned, one of the sailors enquired whether the Ekaterina II and the Sinop had arrived in Constanza. At Theodosia the Potemkin had heard that these two battleships had mutinied. This was the last forlorn hope of the revolutionaries; with the support of these two ships perhaps they could have continued. Upon being told that no Russian ships had been in Constanza, they initiated negotiations for the surrender of the Potemkin.⁷¹

At 8:00 A.M. the next day, the cutter was sent to pick up the harbor master, Lieutenant Captain Negru. As it approached the Potemkin,

⁷⁰ Platonov, p. 117.

⁷¹ Negru in Bogachev, p. 24.

so did a sloop bearing a man wearing a red flower in his lapel. Having obtained permission to come aboard, he introduced himself as a Russian Social Democrat in exile, and presented a card bearing the name Doctor Rakovskii.⁷² He was hopeful that the sailors could be induced to continue the struggle, but quickly gave up the idea when acquainted with the state of both the Potemkin and her crew. To the anxious questioning of the committee, he answered that the sailors could depend on the promises of the Romanian government that they would not be returned to Russia.

With that, the Potemkin accepted the conditions set out earlier: to surrender the Potemkin unharmed and to come ashore as deserters. At 12:30 P.M. the engines were started and Negru guided the Potemkin into the harbor. At 2:00 P.M. on June 25, 1905, the sailors went ashore; the Potemkin mutiny was over.

⁷² Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 313. This was Kh. G. Rakovsky who joined the Bolsheviks after the February Revolution. He was made a member of the Central Committee in 1919. For two years, 1925-1927, he served as Soviet Ambassador to France. In 1927, he was expelled from the party as a Trotskyite. He was caught up in the purges in 1938, and sentenced to twenty years hard labor. McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union, edited by M. T. Florinsky (New York, 1961), p. 469.

CHAPTER VI

AFTERMATH

The saga of the Potemkin mutiny did not end in Constanza harbor. The crew of the 267 were unwilling to surrender to the Romanians. After the fiasco at Theodosia, the 267 had requested permission from the Potemkin to surrender in Sevastopol rather than returning to Romania. The Potemkin refused, and not trusting the 267 although she had proven loyal up until this point, took her on tow to Constanza. At Constanza she again requested permission to return and was given two hours to leave without provisions or she would be disarmed by force.¹

Some of the sailors from the Potemkin also chose to return to Russia. Rear Admiral Pisarevskii, who was sent to Romania to bring the Potemkin back to Sevastopol, reported that 36 sailors surrendered to him.² In all, it is thought that 110 men returned to Russia by various means.³ There is no adequate information on the fate of these men, although one source states that they all received prison terms.⁴

When the remaining sailors from the Potemkin went ashore they were warmly received by the citizens. The funds from the ship's safe

¹ Negru in Bogachev, p. 26.

² Report of Rear Admiral Pisarevskii to Admiral Chukhnin, quoted in Platonov, p. 167.

³ Avdeev, p. 221.

⁴ Ibid.

was divided equally among them by the Romanian authorities so that each sailor received 82 francs.⁵ The men were quickly found jobs throughout Romania. It seems the Romanian government wanted the potential trouble makers dispersed.

The leaders of the mutiny, Matiushenko, Kirill, and Kovalenko were quickly taken away from Constanza by Romanian Social Democrats who feared that their government might be induced to surrender at least these men to the Russians. By the next morning they were in hiding in Bucharest, from there they were sent to Switzerland.⁶ Feldman also fled abroad after he had been rescued from a Sevastopol prison by a number of Russian Social Democrats.

Matiushenko ultimately returned to Russia in 1907 to become a member of a cell of the South-Russian Group of Anarchist-Syndicalists. He was arrested almost immediately in Nikolaev under the name of Fedorenko and executed for his part in the mutiny.⁷

The Potemkin sailors were not allowed to settle in peace. Early in 1907, when agrarian disorders broke out in Romania, the government became suspicious of the mutineers in their midst. There were a number of arrests, but soon the sailors were released on condition

⁵ Matiushenko, Pravda, p. 314.

⁶ E. Arbore-Ralli, "Priezd potemkintsev v Rumyniiu," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 9, 1925, p. 71.

⁷ K. M. Voinov, "Kazn Afanasiia Matiushenko," Krasnyi arkhiv, No. 1, 1925, p. 251.

that they not interfere in the political affairs of Romania. If they did they would be sent back to Russia. A number of the Russian sailors would have liked to leave Romania where they could not help but feel uncomfortable, but they did not have enough money. The Romanians would have been pleased to see them go, and even offered to send them as far as the Austrian border, but no further.⁸ Some of the Russians chose to remain and eventually made a home for themselves in Romania.

* * *

A Russian squadron under Rear Admiral Pisarevskii, consisting of the Chesma, the Sinop and four torpedo boats, was sent to Constanza to take the Potemkin back to Sevastopol. It arrived at 6:00 A.M. on June 26, to find the Potemkin anchored in the harbor flying both a Romanian flag and an international signal which read "Do not attempt to enter the harbor." The squadron anchored in the outer harbor and at 9:30 A.M. the harbor master made his way to the Chesma to pay his respects to Pisarevskii. Pisarevskii strongly objected to

⁸ K.M. Perehygin, "Potemkintsy v Rumynii," Katorga i ssylka, No. 5, 1925, p. 45. Hough, p. 175 wrote that Matiushenko returned under an amnesty, then was treacherously seized and executed.

both the signal and the Romanian flag on the Potemkin. He was apparently concerned that the flag meant that the Romanians intended to seize the ship. The Romanian Consul in St. Petersburg, Rozetti-Solesko, was instructed to calm the fears of the Russian government by explaining the flag was being flown because the battleship was being guarded by Romanian soldiers. Besides, there was no Russian flag aboard and military tradition demanded that one be flown.⁹

The signal was a bit more difficult to explain. In his official report, Pisarevskii wrote that he was told the international signal was not as sharp and tactless in the original French as it seemed in Russian. The signal was flying from the Potemkin because hers was the highest mast in the harbor.¹⁰ The official explanation which was offered to the Russian government was that the signal was intended for torpedo boats and the Russian government was respectfully reminded that a Russian warship had arrived in Constanza without previous notification.¹¹ This was a reference to the Stremitel'nyi which had appeared unannounced on June 21 on her quest for the Potemkin.

⁹ Telegram, Bucharest to Romanian consul in St. Petersburg, June 26, 1905, Krasnyi Arkhiv, Nos. 4-5, 1925, p. 213.

¹⁰ Report of Pisarevskii, Platonov, p. 167.

¹¹ Ibid.

Pisarevskii was satisfied with the explanations offered. At two o'clock the Russians replaced the Romanian guard. The flag of St. Andrew was raised in place of the Romanian flag and a priest blessed the Potemkin.

At seven o'clock that evening Negru received news that the Potemkin was unable to leave the port. She was aground on the mole. He protested that she could not possibly be aground, since he himself had guided her into the harbor. But the sailors, unwilling to surrender the Potemkin unharmed, knowing she was to be returned to Russia, had opened the kingston valves and the Potemkin had settled in seven feet of water. Consequently, it was not until 3:00 P.M. the next day that the Potemkin, towed by the Sinop, left Constanza for Sevastopol.

The Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii was renamed the Sviatii Pantelemion. After the February Revolution she was renamed again, this time the Borets za svobodu (Fighter for Freedom). She was sunk in 1918 in Novorossisk to prevent her from falling into the hands of the Germans. After the war the Potemkin was refloated, then destroyed, as she was no longer seaworthy.

CONCLUSION

The Potemkin mutiny was a failure not only as a mutiny, but also as the spark which could have ignited a larger conflagration in the Black Sea Fleet, in Odessa, and perhaps in all of southern Russia. Ultimately the mutiny failed when the crew, despite overthrowing their officers and taking control of their battleship, was unable to obtain the supplies necessary for independent action. The reasons for the failure of the Potemkin to touch off a broader revolt in the south of Russia are more complex and of more consequence to the Russian revolutionary movement.

While most Soviet historians accept that the Potemkin mutiny was a spontaneous event, they are convinced that a general naval mutiny was in the offing. Some have found this a reason to condemn the sailors for destroying the possibility for a larger mutiny. But, as mentioned above, it is unlikely that there was a mutiny planned for the summer of 1905. The Potemkin might have triggered such a mutiny, just as her example was followed by the sailors of the Georgii Pobedonosets and of the Prut, but she did not. Certainly, the naval authorities feared this would happen. Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure that not just the Potemkin, but no mutinous ship could enter Sevastopol harbor and spread the revolutionary infection.¹

¹ Platonov, p. 40.

Furthermore, the Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet and the Military Council ordered the discharge of reservists called up before 1898 in an effort to eliminate the leaders of the unrest.² These measures may have ensured quiet in the fleet, but only temporarily. In November 1907, there was a naval uprising in Sevastopol.

It was in Odessa that the Potemkin had her greatest chance for success. The people were aroused and willing to turn a general strike into an armed revolt, but the Potemkin failed to support them. If at the outset the sailors had made a landing and armed the workers, the two forces might have been sufficient to take the town. General Kakhanov was convinced that this was a very real possibility and made every attempt to avoid antagonizing either party until he could strengthen his forces sufficiently to deal with the menace. As it happened, the additional forces which reached Odessa were unnecessary since the sailors did not land, did not arm the workers, and did not even bombard Odessa with real effect.

The mutiny and near-revolution were of some importance to the revolutionary party organizations of Odessa. "Martial law ties us by our hands and feet," one party member wrote.³ The authorities feared

² Document 182, Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, p. 244.

³ "Perepiska N. Lenina i N. K. Krupskoi s Odesskoi organizatsii, " Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 7, 1925, p. 22.

that if martial law were lifted there would be a new revolutionary upsurge.⁴ This upsurge indeed came with the October Strike. It was only then that the true effect of the mutiny on the revolutionary parties showed itself for the demonstrations turned into a three day pogrom, which the authorities made no attempt to control. They were convinced that the Jews were responsible for the disturbances; the official reports about the June Days were full of references to Jewish revolutionaries, Jewish hoodlums and Jewish drunkards. Pisarevskii even asked Negru if he had noticed a large number of Jews aboard the Potemkin.⁵ A large number of party members in Odessa were Jewish and this association did much to weaken the effectiveness and even the membership of the Odessa parties.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the opportunity which the Potemkin had of starting a revolution which might have swept throughout south Russia. The 1903 general strike had affected the entire area, but the revolution needed more than a general strike, it needed arms and leadership. Obviously the Potemkin could not arm the workers of all of south Russia, but perhaps as Feldman planned, the sailors could have begun the creation of a revolutionary army which could have captured arsenals as it advanced. As the

⁴ Document 182, Revoliutsiia na Ukraine, p. 244.

⁵ Negru in Bogachev, p. 25.

sailors never left the battleship in force, it is impossible to do more than speculate on this possibility.

Why did the Potemkin mutiny fail to spark a revolutionary outburst? The answer most frequently given by Soviet historians is that the revolutionary parties failed to provide strong leadership to the mutineers and to the population of Odessa as the result of weak and divided party organizations. They insist that the revolutionaries could, and should, have induced the sailors to land, to arm the population, and to lead a revolutionary war against the autocracy. In truth, the revolutionary parties were not prepared to supply either leadership or weapons to the population. They wanted the Potemkin to do both for them. The Bolshevik Committee agitated against the June disturbances precisely because it was impossible to arm the workers.⁶ The events in Odessa were as unplanned as the Potemkin mutiny itself.

If the revolutionary parties exercised no influence during the June Days in Odessa, they also had little effect aboard the Potemkin. If there was a revolutionary organization aboard the ship, it was not influential enough to take control after the mutiny. There may have been individual party members aboard; Vakulenchuk for one was supposed to have belonged to the Sevastopol Social Democratic

⁶ "Perepiska," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, No. 7, 1925, p. 26.

organization, but the mutineers themselves were definite in their declaration that they were "so devoted to the task that they did not question which faction or party to follow."⁷ Kirill and Feldman both gave the "correct" advice to the mutineers, but their advice was not taken. The weaknesses of the party organizations were a factor in the failure of the revolution, but by no means the complete answer.

To Feldman and Kirill, the major cause for the Potemkin's surrender when she could have contributed so much to a major uprising, was a lack of popular support. Kirill felt that the question should be asked not why the Potemkin had failed, but how it had managed to last for eleven days. Neither the revolutionaries nor the people were prepared for a revolution, the unrest was "the spontaneous ripening of the as yet unconscious revolutionary energy of the people."⁸

Feldman wrote:

Could we really have been victorious while all the surrounding coast of Russia took so passive an attitude to our rising? Why did the workmen make no sign in the neighbouring towns from which troops were drafted to Odessa? Why didn't they tear up the railway-lines, tear down bridges, and isolate the authorities in Odessa? Why did not the peasants of the surrounding district send detachments of their sons to the aid of the workmen in Odessa?⁹

⁷ Kirill, "Otvét na Bucharest po povodu 'Pismo iz Bucharesta'," Iskra, No. 107, July 29, 1905, p. 3.

⁸ Kirill, Drama, p. 182.

⁹ Feldman, p. 198.

This lack of support was the result of insufficient development of the revolution. Most unrealistic is Feldman's comment that the people should have barricaded themselves in the port the night of June 15 and fought the authorities, for "the sailors would have hurried to support them, because the sailors could not have looked with unconcern at their brothers suffering in a bloody strife."¹⁰ The sailors may not have looked with "unconcern" but the catastrophe in the Odessa port did not move them from their isolation to the support of the population. The workers may not have come to the support of the sailors but the sailors did not come to the support of the workers either. They both waited on the other.

One factor in the failure of the Potemkin to cause a revolution was the strength, or perhaps the discretion, of the authorities. They never lost control of the situation and were able with a combination of restraint and the show of force to contain the display of discontent. General Kakhanov in Odessa was careful not to antagonize the sailors for fear that they would unite with the workers. Both Odessa and Sevastopol were placed under martial law and troops brought in to prevent trouble. In both cities the authorities felt that the chances of a revolution breaking out were extremely high, but they managed to

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 199.

meet the situation calmly and effectively.

Another reason given for the failure of the mutineers to take an active part in the revolution was that the counter-revolutionary element was too strong aboard the Potemkin. Here historians find support among the leaders of the mutiny. Both Kirill and Feldman were convinced that the conductors were engaged in counter-revolutionary propaganda. Feldman wrote that "the reactionists acted on a preconcerted plan."¹¹ Kirill thought that the conductors were all professional spies.¹² It is unlikely that any one group of men were responsible for the divisions in the crew of the Potemkin. Rather, the crew, outside of a group of revolutionaries, were willing to follow along, but were easily discouraged when events took an unfavorable turn. It is likely that the recruits were less inclined to revolution than the older members of the crew. This at least was the opinion of the naval officials who discharged the senior men immediately after the mutiny.

The most important factor in the failure of the Potemkin to cause a revolutionary storm was the crew of the ship itself. The man who emerged as the leader of the mutiny, Afanasii Matiushenko, was a revolutionary who belonged to no revolutionary party, he was a hero but not a leader. Feldman left an interesting portrait of the man:

... he was the son of the mass, and was only first among them. When the crowd was silent, he was silent; when they began to awaken, he was the first to snatch up a weapon Brave as a lion when the

¹¹ Ibid., p. 204.

¹² Kirill, Drama, p. 182.

crowd was strong, he was at a loss and was the first to lead the retreat when the crowd ceased to feel its strength And so it seemed as though he were leading it, when he was following it, and that he was rousing the multitude when he was being roused by it.¹³

The other leaders of the Potemkin mutiny were Kirill, Feldman, and to a lesser extent, Kovalenko. All were outsiders whose opinions were valued, but who were not decisive in determining the actions of the Potemkin. These actions were taken as the result of consultations by a large body of sailors who put the interests of the crew and the battleship before those of the revolution. Perhaps if the Potemkin had staged a landing, the revolution would have broken out in Odessa. But, with this large group of men in charge, such a determined step was unlikely. Only a powerful and influential leader could have induced the sailors to leave the relative safety of the Potemkin. There was no such leader aboard.

Perhaps if the Potemkin had merely shelled Odessa the population would have rallied, the troops would have fled or joined the revolution, and the authorities would have abandoned the city. But the sailors were incapable of shelling Odessa. They were romantic revolutionaries who hated the autocracy but who could not bear that innocent people should die in its destruction. Kovalenko was not the only one who was

¹³ Feldman, p. 19.

willing to give his life for the revolution, but who could not ask another to do so.

The Potemkin mutiny is generally portrayed by Soviet historians as one of the great events of the Revolution of 1905. Why this is so is not entirely clear. The Potemkin might have wreaked havoc in the Black Sea, but she did not. There were too many factors against the Potemkin's ability to start a revolution, not least being the lack of determination on the part of the crew. If the sailors had landed, if they had been willing to let the innocent suffer, if the population in and around Odessa had started the revolution which the Potemkin might have supported, a south Russian revolution then might have been a fact. The mutiny was a failure, the Potemkin did not cause a revolution, but it seemed to a great many people that she nearly did. All the factors were there, a general strike which could easily develop into a revolutionary situation, and the power to back it up. This was the first time a major military force had come over to the side of the people, the military which the autocracy had used for so long as an instrument of oppression. So, while the Potemkin incident cannot be said to have exerted much influence on the course of events in 1905, it has captured the imagination of many people.

In the final analysis it was the temper, desperation, and the determination of the people which decided the course of events. It

would take the failure of the Duma system, a world war, and increasing frustration to produce men who were willing to create an inferno in which the guilty and innocent alike would die. The Potemkin mutiny remains a fascinating example of a situation where all the prescribed ingredients were present and still the recipe failed.

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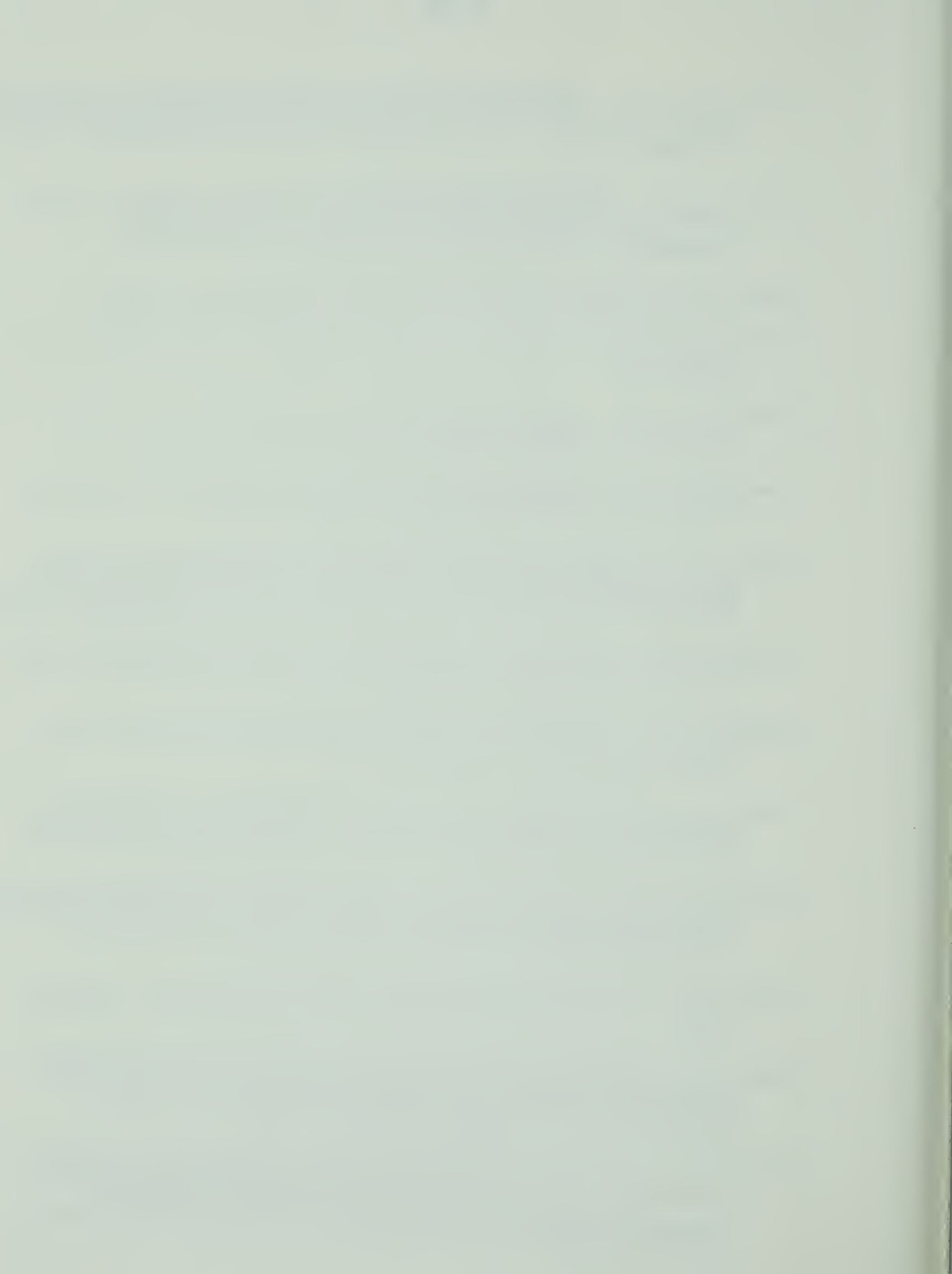
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APPENDIX

Declarations of the Potemkin

FROM THE CREW OF THE
BATTLESHIP KNIAZ POTEMKIN TAVRICHESKII

We beg all Cossacks and soldiers to lay down their arms immediately, and to unite together to fight for freedom: the last hour of our suffering has come! Down with the autocracy!

We already have freedom, we already act independently, without commanders. Commanders are destroyed. If there is resistance to us, we ask all peaceful inhabitants to get out of the city. If there is resistance the city will be destroyed.¹

LETTER TO THE FRENCH CONSUL²

Most honorable people of the city of Odessa. The crew of the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii today, June 15, took from the ship a body which was given to the workers' party to be committed to earth with the usual ceremony after which a sloop was sent to the ship by these workers with the report that the guard standing around the body had been driven away by Cossacks. The body was left without surveillance. The crew of the battleship requests the people

¹ Kirill, Drama, p. 193.

² This proclamation was sent to the French Consul in the belief that as a representative of a "free" nation, he would have it published. Feldman, p. 47.

of the city of Odessa 1) not to hinder the burial of the sailor from the ship; 2) to establish general public supervision of the law; to demand that the police and the Cossacks stop their vain raids as they are useless; 3) not to hinder the workers party from supplying the necessary provisions for the crew; 4) the crew requests the people of the city of Odessa to fulfill the above enumerated demands.

In the event that they are refused, the crew will resort to the following measure: there will be a bombardment of the city from all guns. Therefore, the crew gives notice to the public that in the event of the beginning of shooting all those who do not take part in the resistance [should] leave town. Furthermore, we expect help from Sevastopol [in the form of] several battleships and then it will be worse.³

TO ALL THE CIVILIZED WORLD!

To the citizens of all countries and all nationalities! Before your eyes the mighty events of a great liberating battle are taking place; the oppressed and enslaved people of Russia no longer submit to the centuries old yoke and willfulness of the despotic autocracy.

The ruin, poverty, and lawlessness to which the Russian government has led long-suffering Russia has filled the laborers' cup of patience to overflowing. In all the cities and villages the fires of the people's indignation are blazing up.

³ Kirill, Drama, p. 193.

A mighty cry from innumerable breasts like thunder peals out across all of boundless Russia, "Down with the slave chains of despotism and long live freedom!"

But the government decided that it is better to drown the country in the blood of the people than to give them freedom and a better life. And innocent blood of selfless fighters poured out in torrents over all of Russia.

The government, however, forgot one thing, that the dark and oppressed army -- this strong instrument of its bloody intent -- is the very people, is the strength of that very working mass which has resolved to gain freedom. And here we, the crew of the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavricheskii, decisively and unanimously take this first step. Let all those brother victims, workers and peasants, who fell by bullet and bayonet in the streets and in the fields, take from us their curses as their murderers.

No, we are not murderers, we are not the executioners of our people but their defenders. And our common motto -- death or freedom for all people!

We demand the immediate suspension of the senseless bloodshed on the fields of distant Manchuria. We demand immediate convocation of a national constituent assembly on the basis of universal, direct, equal, and secret suffrage. For these demands we are ready together with our battleship, to fall in battle or to gain victory.

We are deeply convinced that honest and working citizens of all countries and all nationalities respond with fierce sympathy to our great fight for freedom.

Down with the autocracy! Long live the Constituent Assembly!

The crew of the Kniaz Potemkin
Tavrisheskii and of the torpedo
boat 267.⁴

TO ALL EUROPEAN STATES

The crew of the battleship Kniaz Potemkin Tavrisheskii has begun a decisive battle against the Russian autocracy. Notifying all European governments of this, we consider it our duty to declare that we guarantee the full inviolability of all foreign ships sailing in the Black Sea and of all foreign ports located here.

Crew of the battleship Kniaz
Potemkin Tavrisheskii and of
the torpedo boat 267.⁵

⁴ Kovalenko, Byloe, No. 3, 1907, p. 59-60.

⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

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